

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: You Are the Christ

Lesson: Mark 8:27-38 NRSV

I spent time gardening yesterday morning with beautiful people. It was my first gardening experience as I was born and raised in Seoul, S. Korea where most people live in apartments. One of the good things about living in the states is that I can feel and experience the green nature and the order of creation that the Lord has made.

(Slide 1) And it's Grandparents' Day. The names we are called helps show our identities. Each of us has a unique name given to us by our parents. And, there are also many names that describe us. Some are called grandparents. Some are called father or mother. Some are called son or daughter. Some are called friend. Personally, I'm Esther's husband and Evan's pronunciation has not been exact yet, but he calls me "ma-". And, I'm called pastor by you. In this way, we are living our lives with multiple names and multiple identities.

(Slide 2) Jesus was also called by many names at that time. We don't know exactly, but for some reason Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. From the name of the city, we can guess what Caesarea Philippi is like. The city was ruled by Herod Philip, a tetrarch, who named the city Caesarea to show his loyalty to the emperor Caesar. And, he added his name, Philip, on the city to distinguish another city named Caesarea. So, this is why the city was named Caesarea Philippi.

Because the city used the name of Caesar, it had to be splendid and fancy. At that time, Caesar, the Roman emperor, was called Messiah or Christ by people. So, in the city, there were huge temples to worship and praise Caesar and they were so large and splendid that they represented all the idols.

(Slide 3) When Jesus was on his way with his disciples, he asked them: "Who do people say that I am?" (27) They answered him, "John the Baptist." Although John the Baptist was dead, the life of Jesus had many similarities to the life of John the Baptist, so people called Jesus John the Baptist. And, they also answered him, "Elijah who ascended to heaven without dying and appeared again." This was because the belief that Elijah would appear in the

last time was widespread among people. They also answered him, “One of the prophets who was prophesied to come again.” This was because Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and performed many miracles.

(Slide 4) By the way, why did Jesus ask such a question as he was passing through Caesarea Philippi with his disciples? There was a reason why Jesus asked his disciples about how he was called by people. The disciples probably felt timid in front of the great temple dedicated to Caesar. They must have felt cheap before the power of Caesar. So, Jesus wanted to confirm the center of his disciples before the idols and the power of Caesar.

(Slide 5) So, Jesus asked them again: “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” (29) His confession was beyond all the thoughts of people. Most people compared Jesus with the dead John the Baptist and Elijah who had promised to come again. But, Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Messiah was great because he didn’t compare Jesus with someone because Jesus is the only Christ and there is no one who can be compared with Jesus.

(Slide 6) The four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the books to testify that Jesus is the Messiah, He is the Christ. According to John 20:31 (NRSV), it says the purpose of the book: “These are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

To know Jesus, we must see how the people in the Bible met Jesus, confessed, and lived with Him. And, we must have our own confession to confess Him as our Lord and our God.

Then, what did Christ mean for Jesus? First, Jesus sternly ordered his disciples not to tell anyone about him. (30) After hearing Peter’s confession, Jesus prophesied of the suffering that would happen to him in the near future, telling him what the way of the Messiah really is because God intervenes in this world through his suffering, not glory.

He said that “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” (31) He speaks openly about the inevitable Passion and

resurrection that will soon come. The idols of the world try to show off themselves through the logic of glory, authority, and scale, building a kingdom and temple based on their success. But Jesus was totally different from the ways of the world. The world focuses on glory and blessing, but Jesus speaks of the Passion and the Cross, far from them.

Jesus already revealed the meaning of Christ to his disciples through several parables but because it was parables, his disciples did not take it seriously. But this time was different from than before, Jesus told his disciples clearly and directly about the Passion of Christ.

Then, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him because he could never have imagined the sufferings of Christ and he felt that the rest of the disciples' faith is shaken by Jesus' Christology.

But rather Jesus rebuked Peter and said: "Get behind me, Satan!" (33)

Peter made a great confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ, but he was soon called Satan by Jesus. This was because Jesus saw Peter's holy longing and secular desires.

(Slide 7) Jesus called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (34)

The word, "Deny oneself," means 'to give up oneself and one's wishes.' Peter and the disciples understood Jesus' word after his resurrection and they did forsake their thoughts, did deny themselves, and did follow Jesus. The life following the Cross is not like a fantasy movie because it is a life of being like Jesus and walking with God throughout life.

(Slide 8) Messiah means 'the one anointed with oil.' At that time, oil was used in many places. It was used as a medicine to revitalize the exhausted, to heal the sick, to relieve fever, and to relieve pain. The name Christ has the meaning of oil. According to song of Solomon 1:3, Jesus was called perfume poured out.

(Slide 9) Jesus said that if you want to follow me, you must be totally free. It requires a determination to be free from even the matter of life. At that time,

persecution against Christians was so serious that they had to risk their lives to believe in the Gospel. Jesus said to us, “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (35)

(Slide 10) For the early Christians who believed in Jesus escaping the persecution of the Roman Empire, the anchor and the fish were codes containing a message of hope. The name of the recovery ministry that is being held at Faith Family church every Tuesday at 7 is “Anchor of Hope,” and the history of that name is rooted in the early church. The early Christians never betrayed their faith in Jesus, even under the threat of death. Their Jesus and our Jesus today are the same Christ.

Beloved: What do you call Jesus now? How do you confess him? Are you following the life of Jesus? Are you coming to resemble more the life of Jesus?

(Slide 11) Hebrews 12:2 (NRSV) tells that “Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” Looking to Jesus means to believe in Jesus. Looking to Jesus means to resemble the life of Jesus. Looking to Jesus means to meet Jesus. Jesus who was crucified is the companion of our life and the destination of our life.

The name of Jesus Christ contains God’s will and plan to restore our dignity and restore our beauty. He loves you and he saves you. May the love of God and the restoration of the Lord be with you always. Amen.