

# STONE HARBOR

P.O. Box 4049  
Monterey CA, 93942  
831.655.5800  
[www.stoneharborchurch.org](http://www.stoneharborchurch.org)  
Pastor Johnny Potter

March 29, 2009

## **Who Do You Say That I Am?**

Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters

**Mark 8:27-38**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

There are some things and decisions in life that are clearly “extra” – selecting one tv show verses another to watch, or one restaurant verses another...; and other things are clearly “essential” -- the keys to the car, enough food to keep your blood sugar up, enough sleep... all these call out naturally for you to do something about them. Then there are some essential needs which are less vocal, like all those 50 year old medical tests that I have been dragging my feet on having done.

Interestingly, the MOST essential things don't even make any natural noise at all -- they are not of this world but matters of the soul and spirit, matters of eternity. The most important question has oddly and unexpectedly to do with who one person is – it is the question of Jesus' identity. Who is Jesus?

If you get this one right you have found your most important eternal keys, you won't 'hunger', you will have perfect 'rest' and your eternal 'health' will be secured. You get this one wrong and you'll keep tearing up the house to find your keys so you can get to a place and do an activity that in the end you will find doesn't really matter anyway.

We have been studying through the Gospel of Mark listening carefully to this disciple tell the story of Jesus. And today we come to the passage which teaches directly what the whole book teaches indirectly. Jesus Himself asks and then teaches on who He is.

Let's read Mark 8:27-38.

## I. Jesus According to **Others**

### A. Who People of Our Time Think Jesus Was

- A religious teacher
- A man who held himself out to be more than He was
- A renegade Jew
- A myth who never existed
- A person who aligned himself with the God of judgment of the OT who should be opposed
- That's something that was for a long time ago
- A character in cute old story – sweet baby in a manger

### B. Who People of Jesus Time Thought He Was

- Mark 8:28 gives the buzz off the streets of Israel in the First Century that the disciples passed on to Jesus
  - John the Baptist
  - Elijah
  - One of the prophets
- 2 definite people or one of many of the prophets from the OT -- all people associated with the Jewish religion who were less than “the One” who was the ultimate one God would send.
- Clear: There was no consensus yet. People were not sure who He was.

Trans. That being said, Jesus turned to His disciples, and we can hear His question from v. 29 in our ears and in our souls this morning – it is the single most important question you will ever have to answer: “**But what about you, who do you say that I am?**”

## II. Jesus According to **Peter**

### A. Peter to Jesus: “You are the Christ.”

- Answering for the rest of the disciples Peter says Jesus is “the Christ.”
- Reminder: ‘Christ’ is Greek translation of the Hebrew ‘Messiah’ which means ‘the Anointed One.’

### B. Who the Disciples ‘Knew’ the Christ to Be

#### 1. Common Messianic Expectation Amongst the Jews at the Time of Jesus

- Jesus as Conquering King – Deliver National Israel
- The Christ -- This is the first time this term is used since 1:1. M&M: the Anointed One, Christ, Messiah;
- Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary entry on Christ (NIBD): (anointed one) – a name for Jesus which showed that He was the long-awaited king and deliverer. For centuries the Jewish people had looked for a prophesied Messiah, a deliverer who would usher in a kingdom of peace and prosperity (Ps. 110; Is. 32:1-8; Amos 9:13). Jesus was clearly identified as the Messiah in Peter’s great confession...” p. 219

- John MacArthur – “...God’s predicted and long-awaited deliverer of Israel, the supreme “Anointed One,” the coming High Priest, King, Prophet, and Savior.” ... “Like their fellow Jews they [Jesus’ disciples] had been taught to expect a conquering and reigning Messiah who would deliver God’s people from their enemies and establish forever His righteous kingdom on earth.” (From pp. 20-21 of The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 16-23)

Peter says Jesus is the Christ. He says the right answer, but Jesus says in v. 30, don’t tell.

### C. Why Jesus Still Didn’t Want His Disciples to Tell Anyone about Him

1. They knew Him to be “the Christ”, but their understanding of the role of “the Christ” was different than Jesus understanding.
2. **They misunderstood the Christ!** They misunderstood the nature and role of the Christ according to God’s purpose for Him at that time.
3. They were expecting a conquering king, and God sent something different.
  - a. John MacArthur brings out the Jewish misunderstanding about the role of “the Christ” in the life of Jesus – “...when Jesus refused to use His miraculous power for His own benefit or to oppose the Roman oppressors, the disciples wondered if they were right about Jesus’ identity. His humility, meekness, and subservience were in total contrast to their preconceived views of the Messiah.” (emphasis added) Ibid. p. 21

Who was Jesus according to His disciples? Peter said He was the Christ. Jesus did not challenge him as to the correctness of the title, but He did teach them what that really meant.

## III. Jesus According to **Jesus**

### A. Jesus ‘Plainly’ Taught His Disciples What Being “the Christ” Really Meant – (8:31)

1. He must suffer many things
2. He must be rejected
3. He must be killed
4. He must rise again
5. Summary: Saying Jesus is “the Christ” means He was not the Conquering King they expected, but the Suffering Servant King they needed.
6. Peter seems to have heard only “suffer”, “rejected” and “killed” and not realized the significance of “rise again.” I could be convinced that Peter was experiencing in this teaching a major disconnect. What kind of a conquering king makes this type of plan? It does not compute with the rest of human history, with logic...

Trans. Peter pushes back on this shocking teaching. The strength of the words shared between Peter and Jesus speaks to the critical importance of understanding “the Christ.” In 32b -- “Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.”

## B. Jesus Rebuked Peter for Holding to His Misunderstanding of “the Christ”

1. Peter’s Misunderstanding of “the Christ” Leads Him to Rebuke Jesus<sup>i</sup>
  - a. V. 32 – ‘rebuke’ = 1 a: to criticize sharply : [reprimand](#) b: to serve as a rebuke to 2: to turn back or keep down : [check](#) synonyms see [reprove](#) <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rebuke>
2. Jesus’ Understanding of “the Christ” Leads Him to Rebuke Peter
  - a. Jesus’ Rebuke: The Sting -- V. 33: “**Get behind Me Satan!**”
    - i. Meaning of “Get behind Me” – Follow, don’t stand in My way!
  - b. The Source of Peter’s Misunderstanding “the Christ”
    - i. Satan
      - Jesus to Peter: “**Get behind Me Satan!**”
3. The Cause of the Misunderstanding
  - a. Peter had ‘in mind the things of men’ and not ‘the things of God.’
  - b. Holy Spirit to Johnny: “The natural confuses the supernatural!” Those things which come to our minds easily and quickly crowd out the things of God.
  - c. It would have been a lot easier for Peter and the rest in his time to think about ‘the Christ’ as the conquering king’ than it would have been to think of Him as the suffering servant.
  - d. It is a lot easier for me to think about how Jesus works to my advantage in accomplishing my plans for my life, than it is for me to think about how God would have His will and His plan extended through His adopted son Johnny/me.

Trans. So Have-In-Mind-Things-Of-Men-Peter spared with Have-In-Mind-Things-Of-God-Jesus. And this was not some academic argument between the initiated reserved for the isolated halls of the temple. Rather it had implications for all who would be Jesus’ disciples. Jesus sweeps us in to this discussion. Let’s continue in verse 34.

## C. The Implications of Jesus as **This** Christ for Any Who Would Be His Disciples

<sup>34</sup> Then He called the **crowd** to Him along with His disciples and said: “**If anyone would come after Me<sup>ii</sup>, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.**”

1. Three “Hard” Activities Required of All Disciples of Jesus the Christ
  - We must each deny our self – self denial. This is the opposite of having in mind the things of men which comes so naturally. Deny that

you have any good in and of yourself that you can bring to God's table of Grace.

- We must each pick up our cross – this speaks of a willingness to live for Christ even if it means hardship, embarrassment, rejection... and ultimately a willingness even to die if it serves God's purpose. This is not the cross you pick up out of your jewelry case in the morning. It may not be the cross that you had in mind when you first accepted Jesus. But it is the cross Jesus is calling you take up **now**, if you are to be His disciple. As we talk this morning, allow the Holy Spirit to convict you of any course of action God would have you take regarding your willingness to die to your own desires which are apart from His?
- We must each follow Jesus – This speaks of the submission of my will to Jesus' will and active obedience to Him. Is the Holy Spirit convicting you of any course of action you need to take regarding your willingness live under Jesus' headship for God's glory?

The suffering, rejection and death Jesus taught in v. 31 must be for **Him**, apparently are also for 'anyone' and everyone who would be one of His disciples! This is hard to hear. I like the gospel that teaches when we believe in Him everything's going to be alright! This is the "hard" call of Jesus to a life of self denial, cross-bearing, and submission to the Lordship of Jesus, letting Him call the shots in my life.

Less clear here but certainly made more clear later is the truth that just as Jesus' disciples would share in His suffering in this life, they would also share in His resurrection unto eternal life. This is the hope at the end of all the hard.

This is the harder and fuller and truer gospel regarding Jesus. For those who are His disciples Jesus calls us to suffering and a better hope than anything we could come up with in our natural thinking, but it is a different hope and a different life than we would call out for ourselves.

If I am to be a disciple of Jesus I must deny myself, die to my own plans and follow Jesus in submission to Him as my Lord.

Trans. Why in the world would anyone go to this extreme?

## 2. The Reason for Such Self Denial, Sacrifice and Submission Now – **Life Restored to God for all Eternity**

[35-38]

- a. Jesus Lays Out the Plain Hard Life and Death Reality  
<sup>35</sup> **For whoever wants to save his life will lose it,**

but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it.

- i. 'loses his life' = deny yourself, pickup cross and follow Jesus
  - ii. Redefinition of Life – not only do the disciples need to have a new understanding of the meaning of “the Christ” but they/we also need even a new understanding of what “life” truly is and how we lay hold of it.
    1. Our life as God intends it looks very different than our life as we naturally want it. Apart from God we might define life as having our health and strength, position and power, wealth and opportunity, time and ease. Yet God would have us enjoy life in the sense of intimate communion with Him, a perfect Heavenly Father, adopted child relationship marked by mutual love and lived for eternity. What we put as priority, God holds as secondary or even inconsequential.
    2. Let’s lose our lives for Jesus the Christ that we may truly live!
- b. Jesus Answers the Implied “Push-Back” from His would-be disciples, “But this is too high a cost – You are asking me to lay down as dead my hopes and dreams for my life and follow Jesus!”  
Two Soul searching Questions and One Hard Fact is Given:

<sup>36</sup> **What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?**

Gaining the whole world sounds good to me! But here Jesus shows that such gain comes **only** at the cost of the loss of one’s soul – one’s “real self.” We want to have our cake and eat it too. Jesus holds the things that sparkle before us in His left hand and our souls in His right and says you can not have both. When evaluated from an eternal perspective, we can all see that it is no gain at all to gain even the whole world if it requires losing our soul. Like one night of drunken pleasure leading to a life-time loss of reputation, so is gaining even the whole world and forfeiting your soul.

<sup>37</sup> **Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?**

The expected answer is, nothing. There is nothing in the world that has such great value that we would be better off with it other than with out souls.

<sup>38</sup> **If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels<sup>iii</sup>."**

1. **Jesus is Coming Again** – Matthew’s account makes this clear. Mat 16:27: “...the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.”
2. **Our being ashamed of Him now causes His being ashamed of us then.** What is at stake here is our eternal life. The ones whom Christ is ‘ashamed of’ are in an eternal-life threatening situation. If I live as one ashamed of Christ now, I am exchanging whatever I gain (acceptance by unbelievers as one of them, wealth, leisure activities, ...) during this scratch on the time-line of eternity that I mistakenly regard as life, for true life as God intended for all eternity. Life as good as Johnny can produce, in exchange for life as good as God intends.
3. At Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming He will make one of two possible assessments of me based on my assessment of Him:
  - This is Johnny, I am ashamed of Him, for he lived ashamed of me.
  - “Well done, good and faithful slave... enter in to the joy of your master.” (Mt 25:21, 23; Lk 19:17)
4. At Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming He will make one of two possible assessments of you based on your assessment of Him.

With so much at stake, these words of Jesus call me not to have the general idea of who Jesus is but to know precisely who He is.

Can you imagine getting operated on by a cardiac surgeon that only had a general idea about how some parts of the heart worked? I think the blood is coming in from this tube and going out of that one. Or was it visa-versa? Well let me just start cutting...

In all seriousness, a matter of even greater importance than cardiac care is at stake for we are dealing with eternal life. Hear Jesus’ question: “**Who do you say I am?**” You are the Christ. Good. Now which Christ is that? Is it the one who calls you to a life according to you, the Christ who will come alongside you and help you get what you want out of life? Or is it the Christ who calls you to a life according to Jesus who will bring you into life of God’s intentions?

## **Conclusion**

The Understanding of Who Jesus Christ is Calls for a Response of Faith

This teaching of Jesus calls us to learn who He is according to Him. I have failed this morning if you walk out of here and think that you don’t need to learn anything more about who Jesus is. His disciples who lived with Him in person for 2 and a half years still had much to learn about Him. In fact, their pre-understanding of who He was actually

got in the way of them learning from Him more completely. May that never be said of any of us.

Knowledge comes hard, knowledge of the supernatural comes even harder, and knowledge about Jesus comes the hardest of all. Why? Partly, we have a tethered cat in Satan who though defeated on the cross still has power to deceive. Also we have grown up in a Christian culture that for some reason has felt obligated to package the gospel so that it would sell more easily to people who are not inclined to listen to the hard truth that being a Christian requires that we deny our selves, be willing even to die for Him, and follow Him as Lord and master of our lives.

Hear the charge coming out of this passage: Be life long learners of Jesus. Watch out for pre-conceived ideas about Him that come from the enemy or from our culture even our Christian culture. Take to heart and to mind His hard call in this passage: "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." And then go after Him. Do not let it be enough to live as you are living unless you are living as He here calls you to. Abandon the lordship of your own life and take Jesus as your Lord. Abandon superficiality, and go deep. Abandon serving Him and His church a little go all in. It might seem like too great a cost, but really we can not afford to live any other life but the one God calls us to. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world...?

Let's pray. Jesus we say as a church that you are the Christ, the Christ You have taught us about here. You are indeed the King, not one who took up arms and fought political battles for national goals delivering Israel from Ceasar; but the one who lifted up arms on the cross and fought spiritual battles delivering all who come after you from Satan and the curse of long ago. Help us to sit for this final moment in the seat of the learner with your Holy Spirit being our teacher taking the words of Jesus and working them into us. Help us to feel the weight of these hard words pressing in on us. Heavenly Father, have we accepted and responded to **THIS** Christ? Or have we so far responded to some other Christ – one of our own or someone else's misunderstanding? We take You Jesus as our Lord and as this Christ and we today go all in with You. That which we have been holding back we surrender to You knowing that nothing compares with the eternal intimate communion You have for us.

Be glorified in our lives with You and in our lives together as this local church.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>i</sup> D. A. Carson on why the Spirit would continue to teach the disciples about Jesus after His departure – “The reason why Jesus himself has not unpacked everything about himself and his mission to the disciples is that they are not yet ready to bear it ([John]16:12). Even this late in their discipleship, they cannot quite integrate in their own minds the notion of a King-Messiah and the notion of a Suffering Messiah. Until that point is firmly nailed down, the way they read their Scriptures — what we call the Old Testament — will be so skewed by political and royal aspirations that they are not going to get it right.”

<sup>ii</sup> ‘come after Me’ – Must mean more than ‘follow Me’ because ‘follow Me’ is listed as one of the three activities required to ‘come after Me.’ Is it to ‘come after’ in the sense of being His disciple?

<sup>iii</sup> What event/time is Jesus referring to here? Second coming for the consummation of all things?