



Christ Lutheran Church

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

Share God's Word, share His love, and do it now!

Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

"Don't Get it Wrong. Don't be Ashamed." – Mark 8:31-38

2nd Sunday in Lent – February 25, 2018

Pastor Chip Winter

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the Gospel appointed for the day and already read for us from St. Mark's 8th chapter.

My dear family in Christ, you may be able to come up with another category to add to these, but it seems to me that there are ordinarily four responses you can make when someone asks you a question. You can (1) say nothing. In many cases that is just rude, but there are times when a question is asked simply to provoke you and it doesn't deserve a response. Or a question is asked which is frankly none of their business. In that case perhaps a better response would be **"why on earth would you want to know that?"** Secondly (2) you could respond to their question with the right answer, honesty being the best policy. Thirdly (3) you could give the safe answer. At times that shows a lack of integrity, but at other times you are trying not to unnecessarily provoke someone – a part of the soft answer turning away wrath. Finally (4) you could endeavor to answer them with the answer they are wanting to hear. This, I think we would agree, is the least admirable way to answer a question.

Jesus asks a few questions of His closest followers, His disciples, in our text this morning. It appears that Jesus is trying to assess the reception of the message He has been proclaiming as well

as of the miracles He has been performing. At the start of this chapter we received the account of the feeding of the 4,000, with 7 baskets filled with left-overs.

It was immediately after this that the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, displayed their lack of insight or understanding. Witnessing what Jesus had taught about the true origin of sin (chapter seven) and what Jesus had done (chapters seven and eight) they still insisted on a sign from heaven to prove that Jesus was indeed sent from the Father.

This quite understandably frustrated Jesus and He sought to warn His disciples about the effect the Pharisees and King Herod can have on the understanding of the truth. Their littlest bit of error or misdirection can mislead people terribly concerning their salvation by faith in God, alone. It was akin to a little bit of yeast having such a profound effect on a loaf of bread in its proofing or rising.

But this confused the disciples. They had just seen bread multiplied by Jesus to feed the masses and now He was talking about yeast from the Pharisees? Were they a part of this baking business?

So, following one more miracle, Jesus asks how others have been assessing Him. This is a rather easy way to get into the conversation. **What are others saying?** Well, just quote them. **“They say you are John the Baptist, or Elijah or another one of the prophets.”** Very little danger or investment in such answers.

But then the real question is asked. **“Who do you say that I AM?”** We can imagine that some of the disciples took the *first option* – no answer. It’s not because it wasn’t any of Jesus’ business – it is absolutely His business! It may have been because they were searching their minds for the answer Jesus wanted to hear – *the fourth option*. But might it, instead have been because

Jesus was trying to provoke something in them and they were reluctant to act upon it? Wasn't Jesus provoking them to take a stand?

Simon Peter, bold as brass, gives the right answer. He is spot on when he says **“You are the Christ.”** Spot on! Simon Peter has allowed the Holy Spirit to lead him to the correct conclusion.

But, we learn that Simon Peter was wrong on what that title, **“The Christ,”** meant. When Jesus paints the picture of where this is leading – to the torturous cross and the triumphant resurrection from the dead which has been the Father's plan for our redemption all along – Peter rebukes Him. Peter was under the impression that the rule of God in this world would be one of glory and abundance and ease. That, however attractive, was not going to effect the forgiveness of our sins. Only the cross could do that.

Here is where we must be clear and forthright. The same question comes our way. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. In this world, preparing for the Judgement Day, the question before you and me is from the lips of our Savior **“Who do you say that I am?”**

Is Jesus the Word made flesh? Is His Mission, are His Words our top priority? He is the One Who suffered and died for you and me, reconciling us back to God. We follow this cross bearer.

And in following the cross-bearer, He alerts us to the fact that we will be bearing the cross, too. **³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life^[d] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and**

sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Years before Joy Behar equated Vice-President Pence’ statement of following the leadership of Jesus Christ with mental illness, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia provided this pithy warning and encouragement: **“God assumed from the beginning that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools...and He has not been disappointed...If I have brought any message today, it is this: Have the courage to have your wisdom regarded as stupidity. Be fools for Christ. And have the courage to suffer the contempt of the sophisticated world.”**

What’s even more of an encouragement is this: We not only follow the cross bearer, we follow the Tomb breaker, the Tomb emptier. In following this Christ Jesus we follow the one Who endured the cross and its shame to win our salvation. As He once described it, if they persecuted Him they will certainly persecute His followers, His body the Church.

But also in following Christ Jesus our tombs will be broken. On that last glorious day when Jesus returns in triumph we will be raised incorruptible, our tombs forevermore empty. Instead of the pit of everlasting torment that is due to sinners who do not repent and turn to Jesus, we will be ushered into the kingdom new and glorious, a new floor and a new sky, to live with our Lord in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

We follow Him even now. We follow the One Who provides for our every need. We follow the One Who does not brook willful disregard of His Word nor obstruction of His mission to redeem all people to Himself. We follow Christ Jesus, Who forgives, sustains and redeems.

Let this be your answer to all who ask you to give the reason for the hope that is within you.

Amen