

February 25, 2024  
Second Sunday in Lent  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Mark 8:27–38 (Romans 5:1–11)

JESUS IS THE CHRIST, ANOINTED TO WIN FORGIVENESS AND SALVATION.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

When Jesus was born, the Jews were waiting for the long foretold of *Messiah*, descended from King David, to come and save them. The Old Testament Hebrew word we pronounce as “*Messiah*” has a New Testament equivalent that we pronounce as “*Christ*,” both meaning “*Anointed One*.” (Messiah, Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 1446) In Bible times, *anointing* referred to an act of consecration whereby an individual was set apart to serve God in a specific important job or office such as being a prophet, priest, or king.

In our Gospel text this morning, St. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus and His disciples are on their way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and He asked his disciples: “*What’s the word on the street? Who do the people say I am?*” They answer that some say John the Baptist, others say, Elijah, and still others say one of the prophets. But so much for the people’s opinions. Jesus looks directly at His disciples and says:

“*But who do you say that I am?*” Peter answered him, “*You are the Christ.*” (cf: Mark 8:29)

BINGO! Peter gives a *great answer* on the first try. He gives a *wonderful answer*. According to St. Matthew’s Gospel, Peter gets it right, not because Peter is super smart or super spiritual but because it was revealed to him by the Father in Heaven. (cf: Matthew 16:17–19) Peter confesses the right words about who Jesus is and Jesus says Peter is blessed because of it. Not only that but *Christ’s* Church will be built on the solid rock foundation of Peter’s great confession and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

But – Peter has the *wrong idea* about what the Christ would do. He’s got the wrong idea about the work and specific office that the *Messiah* and *Christ* was *anointed* to accomplish. In Peter’s mind, the *Christ* had the power to make his earthly dreams come true. Perhaps He will overthrow the Roman government so that they can be free from oppression. This *Christ* could give them a country where everybody would be safe, everyone could have whatever they want, and they’d be able to do whatever they want. It’ll be a wonderful place to live with no problems or worries. Maybe it was in the back of Peter’s mind that as one of Jesus’ closest disciples, he’d get one the prime spots of importance and prestige in Jesus’ earthly cabinet of authority.

Knowing Peter’s heart, the omniscient Jesus describes for Peter and the disciples the precise work for which He was *anointed* into the office of the *Christ*, and to accomplish.

***“... he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.”*** (Mark 8:31)

Did you hear that word “***must***”? The Son of Man “***must!***” In the original language this word “***must***” signifies the divine necessity associated with God’s will for the Christ. (cf: Gibbs, Matthew 11:2–20:34, Concordia Commentary, 830) We hear this teaching from Jesus’ very own lips: “***It was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer ... to be killed ... and ... to arise.***” (cf: Voelz & Mitchell, Mark 8:27–16:20, Concordia Commentary, 631) This is the office of the ***Christ***. This is the work for which the ***Christ*** was ***anointed***. It ***must*** happen. It ***must*** occur. This is the purpose for the holy incarnation, birth, and earthly life of Jesus.

Even today, many are just like St. Peter, having the wrong idea why Jesus came in the flesh of man and was ***anointed*** into the office of the ***Christ***. Many people look at Jesus’ miracles and draw the conclusion that the Christian Church’s priority should be the social Gospel, that is: battling inequality, poverty, crime, and racial tensions. By doing this we might be able to live free from oppression, problems, and worries. Everyone can have whatever they want, and do whatever they want. And indeed, working toward social justice is good, right, and salutary for every Christian. God desires that we love our neighbor as ourselves – but – social justice isn’t why the Lord of glory left heaven and was made man.

If you go back to Isaiah chapter 53, God through His prophet describes why the Son of God left the glory of heaven and was made man. He describes the ***Christ*** as the One who will be despised and rejected... esteemed not... stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He bore your griefs and He carried your sorrows to Calvary’s cross. With His stripes, you’re healed. He was oppressed and afflicted, and the Lord laid upon Him your iniquity. The Lord God foretold it, so therefore, it was ***necessary*** for it to happen to One who was ***anointed*** into the office of the ***Christ***.

This is the office and work of the ***Christ***. This is the work that Jesus was ***anointed*** for. His name is Jesus, for He saves His people from their sins. (cf: Matthew 1:21) This was His God-given purpose and mission. As we heard in our epistle reading, God demonstrates His love for you that while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you. (cf: Romans 5:1-11) The result is – you are reconciled to God. Christ made peace between God and you. This is why it was necessary that the Christ suffer, be rejected, killed, and rise again. It was His office and work as the ***Christ***. It was His purpose in His earthly life – to reconcile you to God, forgive you of your sins, and grant you eternal salvation.

You can take comfort in the fact that, no matter how bad things are, nothing in this world happens apart from the will of your loving heavenly Father. The Romans were the ones in political power and in charge of Jesus’ crucifixion. But they weren’t the ones in control. The Jewish leaders, the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests, were in charge of arresting Jesus, binding Him, and delivering Him over to Pilate. (cf: Mark 14:43–50, 15:1) But they weren’t in control. Even Peter thinks he knows better than when he takes Him aside and begins to rebuke Him. (cf: Mark 8:32)

Jesus is the One with the power and authority. Jesus is the One doing everything on purpose. Just prior to our text, He cast out a demon, He healed a blind man, He made a deaf man hear, and He fed thousands of people with fish and bread. (cf: Mark 7:24–8:26) Although we heard in our Gospel text a few weeks ago, right after this text, Jesus goes up a mountain to be transfigured, revealing His divine glory to Peter, James, and John.

When Jesus is betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the impulsive Peter pulls out a sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant. (cf: Mark 14:47) Yet Jesus told him to put his sword away, saying that He could appeal to His Father in heaven to send more than twelve legions of angels to protect Him. (cf: Matthew 26:52–53) He allows Himself to be arrested. Standing before the religious leaders and being questioned by the high priest, He remained silent. (cf: Mark 14:53–60)

***“Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’***

***62 And Jesus said, ‘I am...’*** (Mark 14:61–62)

***I am*** is the name God gives Himself in the Old Testament. (cf: Exodus 3:14) So, when Jesus claims that name, He has forced their hand. In their eyes, He is guilty of blasphemy, and they condemn Him to death.

Yes, Jesus could have stopped His arrest, His suffering, His trial, His execution at any time He wanted to. He's God in the flesh of man! He's the One who's in control. Yet, He had a purpose. Everything He did was on purpose. He did all this for you, for me, and for all mankind. To forgive you. To save you. To make you brothers and sisters in Christ.

In Baptism, Christ marked you as His child and set you apart as His disciple and member of the priesthood of all believers. The ***anointed*** One of God calls every disciple, every Christian, to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. (cf: Mark 8:34–38) It's the “***job description***” of the one who is Jesus' disciple. It's not something that you can do on your own, so God gave you the gift of the Holy Spirit so that you might endure.

What is it to take up one's cross? It's not something you chose. It's something that God, in His wisdom, ***allows*** and ***empowers*** you to endure to strengthen your faith in Him. In wide sense it's the Christian's daily struggle with pride and despair, struggle with sin and temptation, and self-denial. Martin Luther writes:

***“A Christian, just because he is a Christian, is subjected to the dear cross, so that he must suffer at the hands of men and of the devil, who plagues and terrifies him with tribulation, persecution, poverty, and illness and inwardly, in his heart, with his poisonous darts. The cross is the Christians' sign and watchword in their holy, precious, noble, and blessed calling, which is taking them to heaven. To such a calling we must render full due and accept as good whatever it brings.”*** (Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, vol. 3, 69, fn. 113)

In the narrow sense, your cross is suffering for your confession of ***who*** Jesus is, ***what*** He has done and continues to do for you, and ***why*** He did it. It's suffering for sharing Gospel story of Christ crucified for you and for all mankind, and His gracious forgiveness of sins, mercy and salvation for all who believe. It's suffering for speaking the truth about God's created order that

boys are boys, and girls are girls, and that God's design for marriage is only between one man and one woman, and that all human life is precious from conception until natural death.

Jesus says, take up your cross and follow Him. Endure trials, tribulations, and persecutions, serve and love others just as God in Christ, serves and loves you. To attempt to save your own life ultimately results in the loss of everything. Even if you gain the whole world you will lose your soul to eternal death and damnation. But quite the contrary, to trust, believe in, and follow Jesus, you reap all the gifts that Christ won for you on Calvary's cross: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what it means to be Christian. It is not only to believe but it is also to bear the fruits of your faith in good works and deeds. It is not only to know who Jesus is but also to believe and confess with your mouth what He's done for you. It is not only to confess your sin but also to take up your cross and follow Him, denying yourself, your desires, passions, and lusts. To be Christian means to be little Christs, being imitators of God. (cf: Ephesians 5:1) It's you your identity given you as a gift in Baptism where you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. (cf: Ephesians 1:13) It's who you are and because it's who you are – it's also what you do. What you do is a reflection of who you are. And faith without works is dead. (cf: James 2:17–18) You're not dead but you are alive in Christ by grace through faith. (cf: Colossians 2:13) Faith in Christ and His Word makes you Christian, and good works; bearing the cross, suffering for His Name, loving your neighbor, avoiding sin are the outward marks of the inward renewal and working of the Holy Spirit.

And who do you say Jesus is? Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Son of the living God, the only crucified, died, and risen Savior the world will ever know.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, Amen.