

Introduction to the Day

Three weeks ago we heard Peter's confession of faith as told in John's gospel. This week we hear Mark's version, when Peter says, "You are the Messiah." In John, the stumbling block is Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh, given for the life of the world. In Mark too the scandal has to do with Jesus' words about his own coming death, and here Peter himself stumbles over Jesus' words. But Jesus is anointed (the meaning of *messiah*) in Mark only on the way to the cross (14:3); so we are anointed in baptism with the sign of the cross.

**Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

And also with you.

**Welcome**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,  
who forgives all our sin,  
whose mercy endures forever.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin and come to God for healing.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Gracious God,

**have mercy on us.**

**We confess that we have honored you with our lips,  
but have harmed our neighbors with our tongues.**

**The cravings at war within us  
cause conflicts and disputes.**

**In our desire to be first  
we make distinctions among ourselves.**

**We place the needs of the poor and the suffering  
last.**

**In your great mercy, forgive us our sins.**

**Draw near to us with grace in time of need,  
and turn us to follow in the way of Jesus Christ,  
our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

God promises to forgive our iniquity  
and to remember our sin no more.

By grace you have been saved.

In the name of ☩ Jesus Christ,  
the source of eternal healing,  
your sins are forgiven.

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn**

**"Lift High the Cross"**

**#660**

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, through suffering and rejection you bring forth our salvation, and by the glory of the cross you transform our lives. Grant that for the sake of the gospel we may turn from the lure of evil, take up our cross, and follow your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**Reading – Psalm 116:1-9**

1 I love the Lord, who has heard my voice,  
and listened to my supplication,

**2 for the Lord has given ear to me  
whenever I called.**

3 The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me;

I came to grief and sorrow.

**4Then I called upon the name of the Lord:**

**“O Lord, I pray you, save my life.”**

5Gracious is the Lord and righteous;  
our God is full of compassion.

**6The Lord watches over the innocent;**

**I was brought low, and God saved me.**

7Turn again to your rest, O my soul.  
for the Lord has dealt well with you.

**8For you have rescued my life from death,  
my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling;**

9I will walk in the presence of the Lord  
in the land of the living.

### **Gospel – Mark 8:27-38**

<sup>24</sup>[Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was <sup>27</sup>Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” <sup>28</sup>And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” <sup>29</sup>He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” <sup>30</sup>And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup>Then he began to teach them 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. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup>He 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. <sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

The Gospel of Our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **Sermon**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

“If any want to become my followers let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.” These are some of Jesus’ more recognizable words. And frankly, they are words that come with a bit of angst. What does Jesus *actually* mean when he says to take up our cross and follow him?

In the context of what is taking place here, we know that Jesus has just told his followers that he is going to endure great suffering and die a gruesome death, and after three days rise again. Peter represents how I would imagine many of us would have responded.

“ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!?!?”

Now, we know what that gruesome death will involve. We know just how great the suffering is that our Savior will endure. We know what Jesus is talking about and what this foreshadowing is *really* pointing to. Which, I believe, makes it even more difficult for us to fathom what it is that Jesus is really calling us to in this Gospel text.

“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.” Full stop.

Is Jesus *really* calling us to endure the same suffering that he went through? Is that what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is demanding of us here? Maybe. But, let’s take a quick deep breath.

If we go back to Peter’s response what Jesus has to say, it says that he rebukes him. He “criticizes him sharply, or reprimands him.” We don’t know what Peter had to say, but we know that Jesus equates it to Satan. Proooooobably not what Peter wanted to hear.

Thankfully, Jesus doesn’t stop at calling Peter Satan. Thankfully, he takes it a step further. “You are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things.”

Going further back, we get a little more insight into what Peter’s rebuke may have sounded like. At the start of this Gospel text, Jesus asks His disciples, “what are the people saying about me? Who are they saying that I am?” After getting their report, he asks, “and who do YOU say that I am?” And it is in the response to that that we hear Peter’s statement of faith. “You are the Messiah. The anointed one.”

Peter is clinging to the hope of what it means to ride the coattails of the chosen one of God. We wonder as people of faith around Advent and Lent what the feeling must have been when the promise of a new king coming is realized in a baby in a manger and a man riding on a coat, the foal of a donkey.

Jesus, from the jump, continually shatters our expectations of how it is that he is going to be king. And Peter shares that frustration. “What do mean you are going to suffer a great deal, die a gruesome death, and rise again on the third day? That’s not the kingship I was hoping to be a part of!” Peter is clinging to the earthly hope of being one of Jesus’ closest friends, all while missing the divine presence right in his midst.

And this, people of God, is why Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow him. We know that the cross was a gruesome sign of tyrant reign, but that they empty cross for us has become a beautiful sign of God’s eternal love. So, is Jesus really calling us to take up our own cross and follow him to that gruesome death...

OR, is calling us the life to which we are promised and called to in our baptism. Later in worship we are going to gathering around the baptismal font, just as we did two weeks ago, and celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. We are going to hear the words spoken that we have heard many times over as we pray in preparation of the newly baptized.

Right off the bat we are reminded of the promise that is taking place. “In holy baptism our eternally loving God frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” That is God’s promise to us. In baptism we are reborn children of God. That is the promise. That is the mark we share.

And, in baptism, we don’t the baptized out into life on their own, rather, we promise to surround them with a caring Christian Community of people who will love them, care for them, and show them everything there is to be experienced about God’s grace and mercy active in the world. And that community ranges from the baptized child’s parents, family, and sponsors to complete strangers gathered in worship.

But, we make those promises knowing full well that we too are marked with the same cross that this child will be marked with, and the same promise. That we, too, have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the Cross of Christ... forever.

That mark is a heavy mark. With that cross comes the mandate in this Gospel text to lay aside every earthly thing that might keep us from fully living into the goodness of God's grace and mercy and *sharing* that grace and mercy with all that we might meet, that all might experience the divine right in our midst.

Sure, at its most extreme you could argue that Jesus is calling us to be willing to endure the death that he did for those that we love, but more so, he is calling us to experience the life that we are promised because of the death that he died. The life that we all share as the gathered people of faith.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

**Hymn of the Day**

**“Will You Come and Follow Me”**

**#798 vss 1, 4, 5**

**Apostle's Creed**

**Prayers**

Drawn together in the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray with confidence for the church, God's good creation, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for the church throughout the world. Form us into communities of forgiveness and grace. Help us to notice where you are calling us into new relationships, and give us courage to embrace the uncomfortable and unfamiliar. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the earth and all its inhabitants. Protect lands at risk of wildfire and heal dying forests. Where fire brings destruction, raise up new growth. Guide us in tending precarious ecosystems. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for those who govern nations, tribes, and cities. Open them to the cries of people in need. Direct them in shaping policies that prioritize the health and well-being of all who struggle with hunger and housing insecurity. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who are ill, all who are lonely or anxious, and all who grieve. We pray especially for *Grady and Jace, Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee.* Draw them close to you and soothe them with the promise of your enduring love. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for teachers, professors, librarians, school administrators, staff, and all who support the education of young people. Sustain them as they shape learning communities, rooted in equity and authenticity. We pray for children of all ages in their learning. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We remember our beloved dead (*especially*), who with the great cloud of witnesses bear witness to your saving grace. Accompany us in our pilgrimage of faith, that we too place our hope and trust in you. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We entrust these and all our prayers to you, holy God, in the name of your beloved child, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

## **Offering**

### **Offertory Prayer**

Blessed are you, O God,  
source of every gift of your creation.  
By these gifts and with our lives,  
help us to serve one another and all in need,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **Sacrament of Holy Communion**

#### **Lord's Prayer**

Jesus welcomes you to this table.  
Come, here is your God.

#### **Post Communion Prayer**

Holy God,  
you have welcomed us to this meal  
and fed us with dignity at your table.  
Send us now to welcome others  
and to be at peace with one another,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

#### **Blessing**

God all mighty,  
God most merciful  
✠ bless you, keep you,  
and give you peace.  
**Amen.**

#### **Sending Hymn**

**“What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine” #774 vss 1 and 3**

#### **Sending**

Go in peace. Follow Jesus!  
**Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.**  
And all of Good Shepherd said,  
**“AMEN”**