

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Second Sunday of Lent - Year B

52nd Week of Pandemic

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalms 22:23-31

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

02/28/2021

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

31[Jesus] 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.³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But 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." ³⁴He 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. ³⁵For 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. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those 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.

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Satan In All of Us

Good morning! There is a joke among people in ministry. And it goes like this: What’s the most common phrase spoken in a church? “But, we’ve never done it that way before!” It’s a joke that transcends all denominational boundaries, and we can find it in churches both large and small, old or new, and everything in between. It’s a joke because it’s so true. It usually happens when a new pastor or priest makes a change, which sees the old guard reply with the predictable phrase. It’s so frustrating because it can even be used by people who realize the absurdity of their comment. But it sticks around, because as long as there are churches, there will be people who resist change. And that’s what’s at the heart of the joke. We fear change. Or at least change we didn’t come up with on our own. What’s most ironic is that these changes are often not that different from something that was already happening many moons ago. As the saying goes, everything old is new again.

And it’s no different for the Gospel lesson today. What we have is one person’s idea for how things should happen, an idea built upon the expectations of the culture at the time, that doesn’t align with what God intended, an intention that fits with how the Israelites were always called to do things in the first place.

At the heart of the problem is what first century Israelites expected when it came to how the Messiah, the Son of Man, would behave. These expectations were deeply tied into the identity of the whole country. And since the country was currently under enemy occupation, and had pretty much been that way for the last 500 years, the Israelites assumed that the Messiah would come and cast off that imperial burden. Now, this may come as no surprise, but people had different ideas regarding how that would actually play out. By far the most popular was the military messiah. The word Messiah literally means “anointed with oil,” and it was the way that a king was chosen for the Jews, and the coolest king in all of their history was King David. So they assumed the Messiah would be like King David; a military genius who would usher in a time of prosperity and respect on an international level. The other Messiah archetype was the religious leader. Where King David was a great military guy, nothing could come close to the reverence and respect that the Jewish people had for Moses. This type of Messiah would lead God’s people down a path that would see them cast off the imperial rule of Rome through Exodus-like stories of power and awe. And between these two types, David and Moses, there existed every possible combination.

So when Peter hears Jesus say “*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,*” he gets a little upset. It just doesn’t mesh with what he, and a lot of others, expect the Messiah to do.

The text today can also be a little confusing. On the surface it can seem like it calls us all to suffering for suffering’s sake. But as Dr. Ira Brent Driggers points out: “*When this passage is taken out of context, it seems to suggest that the mission of Jesus and his*

*disciples is to suffer and die. However, when we read it within its narrative context, we come to see that the mission of Jesus and his disciples is to give life—knowing that earthly powers will violently oppose them.*¹ Let me make it clear, God is never calling for you to suffer because suffering is inherently good. It's that kind of damaging rhetoric that has seen victims continue to experience abuse. No, what God is trying to say is that suffering, when it leads to life, can be something wonderful. And suffering is something that Jesus needs to prepare the disciples for. Again, Dr. Driggers can help us out: *“Jesus dies because powerful humans oppose both his healing mission and, more specifically, the disruption that mission brings to established law and order.”*²

And so Peter tries to straighten Jesus out, which only ends up with Peter getting his own speaking to. *“Yes, Jesus will rise again, and yes, persecuted and martyred disciples will receive new life. But the hard truth is that the road to messianic glory runs through Golgotha. The disciples are following Jesus to a cross.”*³

When we discussed this on Monday some people were uncomfortable with the strength of Jesus' rebuke of Peter. I mean you call someone Satan and it's going to sting. But I think that Jesus is trying to drive home the point that on the path to the cross, there can be no in-between. You're either with him, or you're not. So, in our journey together this Lent, let us find out together who the messiah really is, putting aside our preconceived notions and ideas. Let us walk to that cross together, united in our desire to side with God, not Satan, seeing how this suffering will be transformed into new and abundant life. Amen.

¹<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-in-lent-2/commentary-on-mark-831-38-5>

² Ibid

³ Ibid