

## Discipleship in the Lectionary – 02/25/2024



A look at the week's lectionary through the lens of discipleship and disciple-making.

Second Sunday in Lent

Revised Common Lectionary Year B

Sunday, February 25th

Mark 8:31-38

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### An inescapable moment

The lectionary text for the Second Sunday in Lent begins with Jesus explaining to the twelve the true nature of what it means to be the Messiah. This is the first time He predicts His death and resurrection. As a response to this first prediction, Peter rebukes Jesus – the person who He only just confessed as the Christ (the Messiah) two verses earlier! Jesus' rebuke of Peter is also shocking, "*Get behind me, Satan!*" (v.33) – perhaps so shocking that Matthew's Gospel softens Peter's rebuke of Jesus and Luke omits this incident altogether. Recognizing the Gospels (and the rest of the Canon of Scripture) were written by human authors under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, there is some support for a Petrine influence on Mark's Gospel. Why was it important to include this awkward incident? What is the significance to us?

#### Mark 8:31-38 Commentary

*<sup>31</sup> And 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. <sup>32</sup> And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

"*And he began...*" Mark is indicating a new central theme is developing. Jesus predicts His death and resurrection to His disciples. He will do so two more times (see also 9:31 and 10:33). Each prediction is followed by an incident which demonstrates how the disciples do not understand Jesus' comment which each time leads to Jesus issuing a statement on the true nature of discipleship. In this instance, Peter takes Jesus to one side and rebukes Him. The disciple rebukes the master – the master who Peter had just proclaimed as the Messiah. While confessing Jesus as the Messiah, Peter dismisses the Messiah's prediction. The nature of Peter's rebuke is not recorded. It is enough for Mark to indicate Peter did not understand the necessity of the cross. Jesus then turns and rebukes Peter in front of all His disciples. Perhaps this rebuke was meant for all of them. Presumably, Peter must have attempted to persuade Jesus to avoid the cross. This is exactly what Satan did while he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. We are told the root of Peter's rebuke stems from his setting his mind on the things of man and not the things of God. Peter had a different view of Jesus and His role as the Messiah – and perhaps how he saw his own role and status.

*<sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> For what can a man give in return for his soul? <sup>38</sup> 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.”*

After Peter's failure to understand, Jesus gives His disciples a more detailed explanation of the nature of discipleship. It is interesting to note that the first words of this explanation involve the need to deny oneself, take up one's cross, and follow Christ. Perhaps this was addressing where Peter's mind was focused – on his reality and some of the worldly aspects of being in the inner circle of the Messiah.

#### Reflection and Application

Peter was confronted with something that shattered His understanding of reality. His perception of Jesus as the Christ and what this would mean for him and his fellow disciples was ruined when Jesus predicted His own suffering and death. This was not the vision Peter had! Peter clearly had a more worldly understanding. His response was to rebuke Jesus. If Peter genuinely believed Jesus to be the Messiah of God, then why would Peter reject His prediction? It is one thing for a disciple to rebuke his master but how much more for a disciple to rebuke the Messiah of God?! In attempting to conform Jesus to the Messiah Peter wanted to follow, he behaved no differently than Satan when he too tempted Jesus to forgo the cross.

This passage has two very direct areas of reflection for us as we journey through Lent. First, which Jesus are we following? While Peter boldly confessed Jesus as the Christ, his actions did not reflect the beliefs he espoused. Or to be more charitable, the prediction revealed Peter's misunderstandings. Might there be some discrepancies between what we espouse and our actions? Or perhaps we might have been unknowingly influenced by the many distortions of the Gospel our culture is currently being plagued with.

Second, when Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, Peter was confronted with an inescapable moment. He had to either change his view of reality or to change reality – which he attempted to convince Jesus to do. Like Peter, we are also confronted with situations in our lives that we cannot ignore that challenge our perceptions of reality. Again, like Peter, our immediate response to such situations betrays what is on our hearts and can reveal our genuine beliefs.

