

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Fourth Sunday In Lent, March 14, 2021**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 1, 38:4, 401, 423:1-5, 423:6.

Lessons: Psalm 49, James 3:13-18, Luke 10:38-42.

Sermon Text: Mark 8:27-38.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ, our loving Redeemer, Fellow Redeemed:

The Christian religion is a precise religion. Our Christian faith is founded, not on some hazy ideas or opinions of men, but on precise knowledge contained in the Scriptures. In order to have eternal life, it is necessary to have a certain precise knowledge of Jesus. Jesus himself spoke of it, saying: ***“Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*** John 17:3

It was a precise knowledge of him that Jesus wanted his disciples to have. In the latter part of his ministry on earth, Jesus more and more withdrew from the crowds of people and spent time instructing his disciples. If they were to be his witnesses after his resurrection and go into different parts of the world to preach the Gospel, they had to have a precise knowledge concerning the Savior’s person and work.

This is also a reason why we need precise knowledge of Jesus so that we can be faithful witnesses of him and spread the good news of salvation to others. From our text let us learn:

**WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.**

- 1. It is essential that we know him as the Christ;**
- 2. We should know the divine necessity of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection;**
- 3. We should know what it is to unashamedly confess him and his Word.**

***“Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.”*** This city was northeast of Capernaum. Herod’s son, Philip, had named it after the Roman Caesar and himself. Our text says that Jesus asked his disciples: ***“Who do people say I am?”*** This question was not asked because Jesus was ignorant of the answer. He wanted to hear his disciples speak the truth about his person over against the false opinions of the people. These were the false opinions: ***“Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”*** King Herod, for example, superstitiously believed that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead after he had him beheaded. Others had the idea that Jesus was Elijah, based on a misunderstanding of what Malachi had prophesied. In all cases, the opinions of the people indicated that they thought of Jesus as a mere man.

Then Jesus directed his question to the disciples and asked what they believed about him. ***“‘What about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ.’”*** The belief of the disciples was voiced by Peter. They believed that Jesus was the Christ. To say that Jesus is the Christ is a precise way of speaking an important truth about the person and work of Jesus. It is the same as saying that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the One anointed by God to carry out the work of redemption for lost mankind. Both Jesus and Christ are names that have a definite meaning. Before Jesus was born, the angel told Joseph: ***“You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*** Matt. 1:21 Martha of Bethany spoke correctly when she said to Jesus: ***“I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”*** John 11:27 We are told about Simeon after Jesus was born that he was waiting for the promised Messiah, the ***“consolation of Israel.”*** Then we are told: ***“It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”*** Luke 2:25.26 When Jesus was on trial

before the Jewish high court, the high priest specifically asked him the all-important question: ***“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”*** Mark 14:61 In other words, they asked, Do you claim to be the promised Messiah sent by God? When Jesus said he was, they sentenced him to die for speaking what they called blasphemy.

So Peter spoke a very precise and important truth when he said: ***“You are the Christ.”*** It seems strange, then, that our text says: ***“Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.”*** But the truth is that the disciples were not yet ready to go out and preach about the Christ. They themselves had to have their knowledge much improved before they could do that, as we see from what Peter said to Jesus after Jesus announced his Passion.

For us the precise knowledge of Jesus as the Christ is essential. It is essential for our faith, first of all, for our salvation, and it is also essential knowledge for us to have in order to help spread the Gospel. To know Jesus as the Christ of God, the anointed One, the promised Savior of the world, is a precious gift of grace given by the Holy Spirit. Paul writes: ***“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”*** I Cor. 12:3 If we know Jesus as Lord and Christ, we have every reason to be most thankful, for millions of our fellowmen do not have that knowledge that is vital to salvation.

Since precise knowledge is so important, Jesus proceeded to teach his disciples about the divine necessity of his suffering, death and resurrection.

## 2.

***“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.”*** Jesus had before this referred to his death and resurrection several times. For example, he had said to the Jews: ***“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again.”*** John 10:17 But this was the first time when Jesus announced his Passion in such clear words and with such detail.

It brought forth a reaction from Peter that shows how much the disciples needed instruction. Our text says that Jesus ***“spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.”*** Peter and the other disciples had the mistaken idea that the Messiah of the Jews was to have earthly glory and honor, not suffering and death.

This mistaken idea had to be corrected. ***“But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ he said. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*** Jesus spoke lovingly to Peter when he called him Satan. Peter was very badly mistaken, and Jesus wanted him to have the right knowledge of the Messiah’s work in coming to this earth. So, he told Peter, calling him Satan, to get behind him, that is, out of his sight. Such ideas as Peter had came from Satan, and such ideas definitely had to be put out of the way. Satan would have people believe that the promised Messiah, the King of Israel, should have great honor and glory on earth, and avoid suffering and humiliation. Satan did not want Jesus to die for man’s sin. When we see how Satan deceived Peter, it is a warning to us to watch our ideas, our good intentions, what we think is loving and best, for they may be in agreement with Satan and not with Christ.

Most important of all, it is essential knowledge that we know the divine necessity of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus emphasized in announcing his Passion that the Son of Man must suffer, die and rise again. This was God’s plan of salvation. It had to be this way! This is what Isaiah prophesied of the Christ: ***“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. ... But he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*** Is. 53:3.5 Jesus’ suffering and death as our Substitute was the only way we could be saved. By our sins we earn God’s wrath and deserve only everlasting punishment in hell. So God sent his one and only Son to be perfectly obedient to his commandments, even unto death, in order to pay for our transgressions, and to earn for us that righteousness which alone is acceptable to the holy God. And by raising up his Son on the third day, God declared this redemptive work to be perfect and complete and all men justified for Jesus’ sake. So Paul says: ***“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** Rom. 4:25 What Jesus announced to his disciples he would do as the Christ, had to be done, otherwise there would be no salvation for sinners. And there is salvation only in Christ. Peter said: ***“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*** Acts 4:12

When we hear of how important Jesus' work of redemption is, it should also be easier to understand what our text says about unashamedly confessing him and his Word.

3.

Jesus says: ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*** To deny ourselves is to deny our sinful self, not merely to give up some special habit, desire or practice. To take up our cross does not refer to sickness or all suffering in general. The cross is that suffering that comes to us in connection with our being faithful to God's Word and doing according to his will. We do not choose a cross to bear. It is something God lays upon us to bear as followers of Jesus. Whatever God brings into our lives as a burden to bear as a result of faithfully confessing him, that is our cross.

And we should not reluctantly bear our cross as something we wish we did not have to do. Jesus says: ***"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."*** If we want to preserve our life here on earth, or make it as comfortable as possible before and above all other things, we may indeed save our life here. But we will lose eternal life in heaven. If we are afraid to give up something for the sake of the Gospel, or if our first concern is to have outward peace in the home or the church, we can end up not only losing the Gospel, but also the eternal life the Lord has promised to those who are faithful unto the end.

Is it worth it? Are we really the losers when we suffer here because of our faith? Jesus says: ***"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*** Our soul's redemption is exclusively precious! The psalmist says: ***"No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him - the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough."*** Ps. 49:7-8 Peter reminds us: ***"You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."*** I Pet. 1:18.19

Let us, then, not be sad as we bear our cross after Jesus, but joyfully look forward to him confessing us before his Father and the holy angels. Peter says: ***"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*** I Pet. 1:6.7 Lord, keep us steadfast until then! Amen.

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