

Getting it Right and Wrong

Mark 8:27-33

Rev. Brian Bill

January 7-8, 2017

Man on Street Interview

There are a lot of opinions about who Jesus is, aren't there? The question about His identity is extremely important...and how you answer it will determine where you spend eternity.

I'm pumped to be back in the Gospel of Mark. This is our 48th sermon in our "Servant and Savior" series and we're only about half way through this glorious gospel! Our passage today serves as a turning point in the book. The first eight chapters help us see Jesus as Servant and now the emphasis changes to Jesus as the Savior. In the first half we saw Jesus crisscrossing the Sea of Galilee and from here on out we'll see Him on the way to Jerusalem and the Cross.

We left off with Jesus healing the blind man in Bethsaida and now He aims to open the blind eyes of His disciples so that they can see *who* He is and *what* He came to do.

Let's read Mark 8:27-33 together: ***"And 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?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.' And he asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ.' And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. 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. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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.'"***

Our outline is simple.

- Who do people say Jesus is? (27-28)
- Who do you say Jesus is? (29-30)

- Who does Jesus say He is? (31-33)

1. Who do people say Jesus is? We see in the first part of verse 27 that Jesus heads about 25 miles north with his disciples: ***“And Jesus went on with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi...”*** This area is the region known as Dan in the Old Testament and marked the northern boundary of Israel, near Syria today. BTW, when you hear the phrase, *“from Dan to Beersheba,”* it’s a way to say from the furthest point north to the furthest point south. This was a remote region where the team could get away from the large crowds and religious leaders. This would allow Jesus to do some uninterrupted teaching with his disciples.

Jesus wants them to grasp two primary truths:

- His Person – *who* He is
- His Plan – *what* He came to do

“Caesarea” was named after Caesar and **“Philippi”** was named for Philip, the son of Herod. This distinguishes it from another city called Caesarea on the Mediterranean. This region was the center of Baal worship in the Old Testament and then became the religious center for the worship of the Greek god Pan. The Roman emperor was also worshipped in a temple there. Citizens were required to enter this temple once a year, place some incense on a burning altar and proclaim, *“Caesar is Lord!”* In addition, there were shrines to various gods carved into the cliffs.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus took them there? It was to remind them, and us, that Jesus is above all gods! Since we live in a pluralistic culture that is more pagan than Christian, we too must declare that Jesus is Lord of all, no matter what others may believe about Him.

As Jesus is on the way with his disciples He asks them a question: ***“Who do people say that I am?”*** Interestingly, He doesn’t ask *where* people think He’s from or even *what* He does; instead He wants to know *who* people think He is.

The good news is that the disciples know their culture well enough to understand what people are saying about Jesus. That’s a good prodding for us. We must spend enough time with lost people in order to know what they think about Christ. If we don’t know, it will be hard to help them understand who He really is. Look at verse 28: ***“And they told Him, ‘John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and***

others, one of the prophets.’” These seem like sensible answers, but they’re way off base.

- **John the Baptist.** Both John and Jesus preached repentance and righteousness so it sort of made sense to think that Jesus was John. Since their mothers were related, maybe they looked alike - lol. Herod beheaded John and yet according to Mark 6:14 he believed that Jesus could have been the resurrected John.
- **Elijah.** Elijah and Jesus did convincing miracles and Elijah was transported to heaven without dying. Plus, Malachi 4:5 says that Elijah will return before the day of the Lord.
- **One of the prophets.** Jesus certainly seemed like a prophet and perhaps reminded some of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet.

People today have all sorts of views of Jesus...

- Muslims believe Jesus was a prophet but wasn’t the son of God or crucified on a cross.
- Hindus believe Jesus is just one of millions of gods.
- Buddhists, according to the Dalai Lama, believe Jesus is the model of a *“spiritually mature, good, and warm hearted person.”*
- Jews believe Jesus was a prophet and teacher, but not God.
- Mormons believe Jesus is a god, but that any human can also become a god.
- Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Jesus was once the Archangel Michael and not God in the flesh.
- Atheists deny Jesus ever existed at all.
- Agnostics don’t know what to believe about Jesus.
- Many in society believe Jesus is just a great teacher with some good ideas about loving and helping others.

2. Who do you say Jesus is? After listening to their answers, Jesus moves them from reciting popular opinion to stating their personal affirmation in verse 29: *“And He asked, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”* The word *“but”* is a transitional word that introduces a contrast. It’s as if He’s saying, *“OK, good job telling me what others think, however now I must know what you think.”* The word *“you”* is emphatic and could be translated this way: *“But who do you yourselves say that I am?”* When I see those words, *“I am”* I think of all the *“I am”* statements from the Gospel of John and what God said about Himself in Exodus 3:14: *“I am who I am.”*

Jesus is not content just having the disciples hang out with Him. He is calling them to a confession and as we'll see in two weeks, to commitment. Peter speaks up and quickly affirms, "***You are the Christ.***" By using the word "***the***" Peter is indicating that there is no other; Jesus is the one and only One. The word "***Christ***" is the Greek word for the Hebrew title "***Messiah***" and means, "*the anointed one*" who was promised in the Old Testament. Peter is basically saying, "*You're the One who will cleanse our culture, reestablish Israel's supremacy among the nations and usher in an era of peace and holiness.*"

It sure seems like Peter nails it, doesn't it? And yet, as Jesus often does, He says something surprising in verse 30: "***And He strictly charged them to tell no one about Him.***" Aren't we supposed to go with the gospel? Weren't the disciples commissioned to share the good news? What's going on here?

The phrase, "***strictly charged***" means that He admonished them sharply with a rebuke. The basic reason He gave them this restriction is that they didn't fully understand who He was or why He came. They didn't get it yet. They wanted to crown Him as King but didn't realize that Christ was compelled to go to the Cross. Jesus also wanted them to keep quiet because He didn't want crowds of people showing up.

3. What Jesus says about Himself. We won't fully understand *who* Jesus is until we get *why* He came and *what* He came to do. Listen to verse 31 as I put the emphasis on one key word: "***And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must...***" This word means, "*necessary; has need of, under compulsion.*" So what is it that the Son of Man *must* experience? We see four things:

- **Must suffer many things.** Up to this point, no one was connecting suffering with the Messiah, even though passages like Isaiah 53 clearly say this.
- **Must be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes.**
- **Must be killed.**
- **Must rise again after three days.**

Jesus was not just predicting that these things would happen; He's saying that it's all part of the preordained plan. He didn't say, "*The Son of Man would suffer*" but that He "*must*" suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise again. All of this had to happen in order for atonement to be made for sin, to satisfy the holy wrath of a

righteous God. He had to absorb our iniquities and serve as substitute for our sins because as Hebrews 9:22 says, ***“Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.”*** Romans 4:25 states that He must be ***“delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”***

It’s important to know that Jesus did not die as a helpless victim at the hands of the Romans and the religious leaders. No, He came *in order* to be killed. He was born *so that* He could die. He was rejected *before* He could be raised. He suffered violence *so that* he could declare victory and vindication. Acts 2:23 captures both the preordained plan of God and the responsibility of those who did what they did to Him: ***“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”***

When Jesus told them what was about to happen, verse 32 says, ***“And He said this plainly.”*** He didn’t hold back but instead spoke frankly, confidently and without reserve. Do you know anyone who speaks without a filter? Don’t look at the person next to you! This is Jesus speaking without a filter. It’s an outspokenness that conceals nothing. It’s in the imperfect tense, meaning He said it frequently – we know He spoke of His death and Resurrection at least two more times on the way to Jerusalem.

This is interesting because Jesus often taught in parables and metaphors. John 16:25 gives us some insight: ***“The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.”*** Jesus is now being clear and concise as He explains that the cross awaits Him. *He is the King who must first go to the Cross.*

You would think the disciples would nod their heads as they tried to process this information. Or maybe they would ask some clarifying questions. Instead, Peter does something that is shocking: ***“And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.”*** The idea here is that Peter took Jesus off by Himself and let Him have it. This is the same word used in verse 30 that means, *“to admonish sharply.”*

Before we get too hard on Peter, some of us don’t like Jesus’ plans either. When something happens that we don’t like, we lash out at Him. Have you ever rebuked God?

Peter got it right and then he got it wrong. We’re a lot more like Peter than we want to admit. We worship in here and then get wasted out there. We give to God

here and gossip out there. We say we believe in here and then bail on our faith out there.

- Peter called Him Lord...and then told Him what kind of Lord He should be.
- Peter got it right when he confessed Jesus as the Christ...and got it wrong when he tried to remove the cross and the resurrection.

In a strange way, I find encouragement from this - if Peter messed up and was restored, we can be restored as well. We get it right and we get it wrong, don't we? Peter needed to grow and so do we.

Peter pushed back when he heard about the suffering in store for the Savior. It's probably because Peter wanted smooth sailing and knew that if Jesus was headed into some hard times, then they were as well. We don't like the way of suffering and rejection either, do we? We'd rather focus on God's favor so we can have our best life now. We're repelled by the message of rejection. But remember what Jesus said in John 15:18: ***"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."***

What Peter was really doing was trying to make Jesus into his own image as he tried to remove the gospel message from the Messiah. It's easy to fall into this when we say something like this: *"My God wouldn't send people to Hell."* That's a God made according to what you want but it's not the God of the Bible. Some of us have uttered words that sound like this: *"I can't believe in a God who took my family member or friend from me."*

Listen. Jesus was all about suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. In short, that's the gospel. I find it very sad and maddening how so many "Christian" books and "Christian" movies are not anchored to the gospel. Instead of celebrating the Savior, many simply elevate self.

Before I explain what I mean let me first share a term that describes much of American spirituality today - *"Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."*

- *Moralistic* = God wants people to behave.
- *Therapeutic* = God wants us to be happy and well adjusted.
- *Deism* = There is a God, but He made the world and then left it alone. God isn't personally involved in the everyday lives of people.

I've always been fascinated by books that make the bestseller list and often consult the NY Times list to find out what to read next. I'm reading the *Hillbilly Elegy* right now. This helps me understand what others are reading so I can make bridges with those who don't know Christ yet.

About a month ago I saw a Christian bestseller list and picked up copies of 3 of the top 5 "Christian" books (and I use that term loosely). Listen carefully as I read a selection of the summaries found on the back covers of these bestsellers and then let me know if you hear anything about our sinfulness, the glory of God or the gospel...

1. *"Here's the good news, though. There is nothing wrong with you...you're not defective or faulty. All through the day, dwell on what your Creator says about you: 'I'm healthy. I'm valuable. I'm victorious.' When you think better, you'll live better."* By the way, this book retails for \$24! I wouldn't spend 24 cents on it!
2. *"THE KEY TO THE LIFE YOU WANT IS INSIDE YOU. One question lies behind every struggle we face: How do I deal with myself? Behind all our stumbles, behind each of our missteps, behind every one of our failings lies an ability to handle...the 'I-Factor.' More than self-worth or self-respect, beyond even character and perception of purpose, the I-Factor is about managing yourself—your whole life—well...Weaving together personal stories, practical principles, and profound biblical truth, The I-Factor provides the key to achieving the life of greatness that you are destined for."*
3. *"The Book of Mysteries opens up with a traveler and his encounter with a man known only as 'the teacher.' The teacher takes him on an odyssey through desert mountains, valleys, gardens and plains, encounters with nomadic tent dwellers, caverns and ancient ruins, chambers of scrolls and vessels, and more. The reader is taken along to partake in the journey and in all the teachings and revelations. The traveler keeps a journal in which he writes down each of the mysteries given to him by the teacher in his one-year odyssey—365 different mysteries—one for each day of the year. Thus, on top of everything else, The Book of Mysteries is also a daily devotional unlike any other. And each mystery contains a special mission for each day of the year, a mission that takes the revelation and applies it to reality for a life-changing journey."*

Did you hear anything about you and I being sin-soaked people in desperate need of a Savior? I'm sure you've heard by now about the four young adults in Chicago who kidnapped and tortured a special needs teenager for two days and live streamed it on Facebook. How do you even explain this kind of despicable hatred, brutality, and depravity without talking about unbridled evil and the pervasive sinfulness of the human race? What about the shooting at the Fort Lauderdale Airport on Friday? How does all this line up with the blurb from the first book I read – *“There is nothing wrong with you...you're not defective or faulty.”*

Did you catch a glimpse of the good news of the gospel anchored to the suffering, rejection, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in any of these bestsellers? Did you hear anything about God's holiness or His honor? Were we challenged to live for His glory as we seek to celebrate the fame of His name or were we told to seek satisfaction from what's already inside of us? Did you hear that the Bible is the complete and final revelation of God or were you urged to uncover additional revelation?

Let me remind you how these books get on the Christian bestseller list – Christians are purchasing this pabulum! Friends, this is spiritual junk food! Actually, it's more like ingesting poison into our minds. As your pastor, I plead with you to stay away from this blatant heresy. One passage is on repeat in my mind as I reflect on all this. It's found in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: ***“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”***

Shortly after this extremely unsettling experience, I received an outreach magazine here at the office. As I was flipping through the pages, I came across a multi-colored, multi-paged section celebrating a brand new movie that will hit theaters on March 3rd. My eyes immediately filled with tears and I started to feel sick to my stomach as I read breathless endorsements by pastors and ministry leaders for *The Shack*.

This outreach ministry is offering pastors a 5-week campaign kit at a cost of only \$59.95 featuring clips from the movie, sermon suggestions, movie-branded tools, small group study guides and the opportunity to have an exclusive premier movie night the day before it opens in theaters. Churches are urged to *“take over a single theater or an entire multiplex.”*

I've read this book carefully and while the author develops the theme of "great sadness" in the face of terrible tragedy, his confusing depiction of the Trinity is extremely dangerous. While it's meant to be a fictional parable, it's filled with doctrinal error. Unfortunately, the book downplays the gospel of Jesus Christ and lifts up universalism and extra-biblical revelation. Albert Mohler calls it, "*undiluted heresy.*" I agree. Incidentally, I read that the author is no longer a member of a church and is even reticent to call himself a Christian.

If you'd like to read an extensive review on the book by Tim Challies, go to the "Sermon Extras" tab on edgewoodbaptist.net.

While sometimes movies are different than the book, the trailer I watched indicates that the man (and woman)-centered depiction of the Trinity is at the heart of the film. Please be cautious. I recommend you *don't go* and see it. At the same time, let's leverage our conversations with our neighbors, co-workers and classmates who will watch the movie.

Brothers and sisters, we are called to be discerning. Don't just swallow something that is supposedly "spiritual" or claims to be "Christian." Let's be like the Bereans in [Acts 17:11](#): "***They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.***"

After Peter had the nerve to rebuke Jesus, we read what happens next in [verse 33](#): "***But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter...***" Peter tried to get Jesus off to the side to correct him in private but now Jesus turns to make sure all the disciples share in his public rebuke of Peter. This is the third time we see this same word used. Here's what Jesus said, "***Get behind me, Satan!***" He's literally telling Peter to get out of his sight and then He tells him that he's acting like Satan himself. Peter goes from getting the answer right to behaving like the Adversary. One minute Peter is a spiritual rock and now he's a stumbling block.

It's helpful to remember that when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness He was ultimately trying to keep Christ from going to the cross. Satan promised Jesus all the kingdoms of the world without having to suffer, be rejected, be killed and be raised from the dead. After Jesus dismisses the devil by quoting Scripture, we read this startling statement in [Luke 4:13](#): "***When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.***" Peter was that opportune time and when he tried to gut the gospel, Jesus rebukes him just like He rebuked Satan.

Listen to how verse 33 ends: ***“For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*** When Peter put his mind on what made sense to him, he was way off base. If he had set his mind on the things of God, he would have responded differently.

How many of you are following our January reading guide through the Book of Proverbs? This truth reminds me of our memory verse for this month from Proverbs 4:23: ***“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”*** To ***“keep”*** means to be under control and ***“all vigilance”*** refers to what guards do when they are protecting something valuable. We must be vigilant about setting our hearts on what is true because what a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Here then are some ways we can set our minds and hearts on the things of God...

Action Steps

1. Rehearse the gospel on a daily basis. Some time ago I read a very helpful book called, *Note to Self: Preaching the Gospel to Yourself*. It helped remind me that if it weren't for the grace of God, my sins would consume me. I am a wretched sinner but Christ is a glorious Savior. The gospel keeps me humble and hungry to keep growing.

2. Seek to have a gospel conversation every day. When we rehearse the gospel daily we'll also want to share it with others. Make it a point to pray that God would give you an opportunity to share Christ every day. I had a neat opportunity on Thursday night when I was with a number of people I serve with as the chaplain for the Quad Cities Missing Person Network. Before I went to our banquet I prayed that God would open up an opportunity...and He did. Here's an idea: pick up a copy of Anchor for the Soul on the Resource Table in the lobby and give it to someone this week. By the way, 100,000 copies of the English version were delivered to the QCA on Friday! These books will be shipped to prisons, jails, pregnancy resource centers, the military and to ministries all over the United States. The Spanish version should arrive in April.

3. Don't let your feelings run your train. Too many of us are led by our feelings and not by facts or our faith. I've shared this simple illustration before but it bears repeating so we don't forget it. Think of a train where the engine is FACT, the

coal car is FAITH and the caboose is our FEELINGS. We get in all sorts of trouble when our feelings run our life.

4. Live a gospel-centered, self-effacing, God-glorifying life. It's not about you, no matter what a book may tell you. Let me share a secret with you: *The secret is not inside yourself!* Seek the Savior with all you have. Join a Growth Group or if you're new, come to the Next Step Groups that meets in the south overflow at 9:30 am. Live for His pleasure alone as you gather, grow, give and go.

And so we end where we began with a question. *Who do you say that Jesus is?* Everyone must come to a conclusion about Christ. Will you confess Him for who He really is right now?

[Go down aisles with microphone, asking people this question: *Who do you say that Jesus is?*]

Closing Song: "Jesus Messiah"