

CHRIST IS IN CONTROL
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

MARK 8:27-38
MAR 1, 2015

²⁷ 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?” ²⁸ And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

³¹ 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. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ 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.”

³⁴ And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ 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.”

What does an iceberg look like?

If you have ever seen one in picture, it may have looked
20 to 30 feet high, maybe twice that across.

If you were on boat and saw one like that, 50 feet out
you might think you are coming close to an iceberg.

But if you know much about icebergs you know
appearances are deceiving because most is under water.

If it looks 20 feet high, it is really 100 feet top to bottom.
And if it looks like you are getting close to one
you may already be just about to crash into it.

This is why icebergs can be beautiful but deadly.

In text, Jesus is talking to disciples about something else
that is not what it appears to be on the surface,
the kingdom of God.

and why the coming of this great kingdom means death.

THE CHRIST IS JESUS, HE IS NOT JUST COMING
WE GIVE UP ON SELF TO LIVE SUBMITTING TO GOD
CHRIST SAVES OUR SOUL IN RETURN FOR OUR SHAME

THE CHRIST IS JESUS, HE IS NOT JUST COMING

²⁷ 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?” ²⁸ And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

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Conversation takes place as Jesus is on retreat with disciples,
away from mobs clamoring for miracles.

because he wants to prepare them for what is coming up,
his death and resurrection.

So they are in Philippi, region ruled by Herod Philip,
just north of Galilee, ruled by his brother, Herod Antipas.
Philip and Antipas each controlled territory with borders.

Anyone inside those borders was under their control.

When people thought of kingdom, this is what they pictured.

So Jews who expected messiah to bring kingdom of God,
this is what they pictured: territory and control.

like state of Israel in middle east today.

Meanwhile, today, ISIS vision of what it means to be Islamic
means controlling territory ruled by Islamic Caliphate
where everyone must obey Islamic rules or die.

Christians have sometimes pictured same kind of thing.

At time of Luther, John Calvin took control of Geneva
to make it a state ruled by Christian principles.

Pilgrims established Plymouth Plantation as place where
everyone would be forced to live by their Christian rules.

Jesus had been preaching: the kingdom of God is here.
but people looked around and didn't see it.

So, as the disciples report, they assumed Jesus was
a forerunner of the kingdom, like John or other prophets.

But Peter is right, the Christ is already here. Jesus is Christ.

This means the kingdom is not just near but here.

Like Jesus and his disciples walking through Philippi,
church is always believers walking through foreign territory.

As Jesus later explained, don't believe anyone who says
kingdom of God is over here or there, because it is in you.

It is hidden in plain sight, like an iceberg under surface.
not like cloud that looks big but is just fluffy
instead appearing small but solid as rock.
So Jesus warns disciples not to tell anyone he is the Christ,
the will get the wrong idea,
but he tells them plainly about his death and resurrection
because they still don't understand
how this kind of kingdom comes
not using power to take control of others
but using power to endure suffering & death & rise.
This is the kind of power that transforms lives.
In this kingdom we don't submit because if not we will die
but we submit because we have already died.

WE GIVE UP ON SELF TO LIVE SUBMITTING TO GOD

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To see an iceberg up close, you have to get into a little boat.
If big ship gets close to one, it is in danger of being sunk.
One way or another you have to abandon ship.
If you are going to follow Christ, you have to abandon ship.
When we hear "take up your cross and follow me"
we picture Jesus on the way to Calvary.
but this hadn't happened yet, Disciples couldn't picture it.
Those they had seen carrying crosses were defeated rebels
who were being treated as traitors to those in control.
This is what we must become. We are by nature
rebels fighting against God for our independence.
The biggest enemy of the kingdom is our sinful nature.
We must accept defeat & die to our illusions of grandeur,
submitting to his plans for us instead.
Even when God's kingdom has come to us,
we must constantly resist rejoining the insurgency.

like Peter who, even though he knew Jesus was the Christ
tried to tell him that his way of doing things was no good.
Surely there is a way to success without suffering.
I think Peter resisted Jesus' suffering because he knew already
that this would mean he as a follower would suffer too.
When we have difficulties in life, we may think,
surely this is not what my life should look like.
I do not yet have what God has planned for me.
Even as Christians, loved by God, we will sometimes suffer.
What Jesus is talking about here is specifically
suffering because of our faith in the gospel.
as some still today lose their life because of this faith.
But ultimately, who takes our life because of the Gospel? God
Carrying the cross to follow Jesus
and giving up our life for the sake of the gospel
is not just warning of consequences but a gracious invitation
to trust in Jesus who goes ahead of us to the cross.
and to release our fearful grip on our life,
letting God take it into his own hands,
for the sake of what he hands over to us instead:
Jesus and his gospel, which is worth far more.
We can do this because...

CHRIST SAVES OUR SOUL IN RETURN FOR OUR SHAME

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What can we give in exchange for his soul?

Nothing we have is as valuable,
Yet we try to mortgage our spiritual lives,
thinking they will earn us get worldly things,
thinking we can make the payments with our behavior
and we keep ending up short, risking forfeiture.

But Jesus has something valuable enough to give
in exchange for our souls his own life.

Peter didn't think cost was this high, but it is, & Jesus knew.

So he resists Satan's temptation to try to do things easy way.
He gives all he has for all we have,
which includes all our sin and shame.
Teens don't like parents embarrassing them in front of friends.
One of most embarrassing things parents can do
is treat them like their dear little children.
They would rather be seen as strong & independent.
Is also embarrassing to be seen with others weak or foolish
because we can seem weak or foolish by association.
This adulterous and sinful world, proud of self and selfishness
and unfaithful to the God who loves us,
is going to look in disdain on those who admit weakness
and as life-losers depend entirely on the love of God
but we are willing to bear this shame
because Jesus has born our shame, the shame of all our sins.
He was willing to take the shame of the cross for us,
claiming our weakness and failure and guilt.
Same Jesus will come again in glory with the holy angels,
and will not shy from being associated with us
but will claim us as his own.
We deny self by abandoning both our self-centered sin
& our self-defeating guilt and giving both over to Jesus
not by our self-sacrifice and our crosses but by
being joined in Holy Baptism to his sacrifice & cross
and his dying and rising again.
So that, as Paul writes in Epistle, having peace with God,
we can rejoice even in our suffering.
because we follow Christ whose kingdom is like iceberg
great & powerful although it doesn't appear on surface.

THE CHRIST IS JESUS, HE IS NOT JUST COMING

The kingdom is already here, hidden in plain sight.

Jesus comes behind enemy lines by suffering & death.

WE GIVE UP ON SELF TO LIVE SUBMITTING TO GOD

we abandon our own grip on our rebellious lives

to grab hold of the gospel and the cross of Christ.

CHRIST SAVES OUR SOUL IN RETURN FOR OUR SHAME

He has given his life for our shameful souls

and returned to life again to bring us God's glorious love
on which we are not ashamed to totally depend.