

LOVE WINS – MARK

Who Am I?

Mark 8 27 – 9.13

I wonder whether the gospel of Mark is attractive to our fast-paced sound bite culture? It's event after event after event.

We were left last time pondering the faith of the Syrophoenician woman. Since then Jesus goes on to heal the deaf and mute man, feeds the 4 thousand, and heals the blind man, all in a couple of weeks, or at least you can read it that way, everything seems to be happening at pace.

What we read less about in the gospel, is the time they spent resting, time spent each Sabbath worshiping God, we don't read much about the time in-between big events where friendships were formed, where they laughed and danced together.

I have been watching The Chosen series recently and it fills in some of the back story to the Gospels, or at least it's an interpretation of the events, it explores the life of those involved in Jesus's ministry. And you get to see the Gospel in a new light.

I wonder when do we spend that time together just getting to know one another, I hope we can be village this lunch time. The women had a blessed weekend away and there is a men's weekend at the end of September no plug!

But when do we get the opportunity to get to know one another, to meet Jesus in our conversations and perhaps let him ask a couple of questions that may change your lives.

So, we come to Mark 8 v 27

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.
On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

It says they were on their way, perhaps you can picture the scene, they may have stopped for lunch picked some berries off a tree or perhaps they were resting from the mid-day heat.

And then Jesus throws in this question, perhaps just in passing, who do people say I am?

Jesus is great at one liner's and a man of few words, all he said to the Syrophenician woman was; 'For such a reply you may go, the demon has left your daughter.' No big words no fanfare the job is done! There are many examples in the bible where Jesus cuts to the truth in a simple yet profoundly deep way. Even just the mention of a name, when all he said was; 'Mary', and her heart melted.

How often do we allow Jesus to speak to us and wait for the answer, Ian often says; 'How's your heart.' Do we spend more than 30 seconds thinking about it? When do we spend time with God inviting him into the deepest places of our heart? To receive his love, restoration and reassurance that we are loved by him.

So, how is your heart, how is our heart as Gods community at CBC?0

Jesus asks the question of us today; 'Who do people say I am?' It's a question people have been pondering, arguing and debating ever since Jesus' birth.

If we asked this simple question of people today; 'Who do people say Jesus is?' How many would say he was the Son of Man? Saviour of the world? Would people say he was a religious person, a prophet, some strange person who lived in Israel, a bit like Ghandi, a good person, but perhaps that would be about it?

We read:

²⁸They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

I wonder, does Jesus still have a voice in society that people want to listen to and take note of? How should we reflect all that Jesus has taught us in our daily lives?

So, Jesus softens them up with the first question; 'Who do people say I am?' then comes the killer question guys you have been with me some time and seen many things, ⁹"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

It's a question Jesus asks us today this morning, who do you say I am? Not what other people think, but you who do you say I am?

Peter is the only one recorded saying; 'The Christ' (Gods chosen and anointed Son) and Jesus tells them not to tell anyone about him.

We don't know why, but maybe because he wanted people to understand the true message of the Kingdom of God, rather than being shackled with the traditions of the Old Testament, Jesus was so much more and is so much more.

So, he asks; 'Who do you say I am?'

We can come back with the right answer, as Peter did, Jesus you are The Christ The Son of God. With our intellect can understand this concept.

Peter did in his head, but did he in his heart?

A true lifechanging understanding of Jesus, only came to the disciples at Pentecost, through the Holy Spirit.

In the next part of the chapter we read, Jesus predicts his death, but Peter takes Jesus to one side and rebukes him; 'This can't be!' Jesus' retort; 'Get behind me Satan' he said; 'You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of man.'

Peter went from hero to zero in the space of a few minutes,

In Mathews Gospel chapter 16 we read in the parallel passage.

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church.

But not yet...

Although it does highlight the question, do we see the world and people through Kingdom eyes or human eye's?

If Peter had been on my team and he had put his foot in it again and again even going on to deny he even knew Jesus, he would be off my team.

However, Jesus always looks at Peter and at us, and sees our kingdom potential, however many times we mess up.

So often we can value ourselves and others, only through the mistakes we make, seldom do we remember people only for the good they have done, their mistakes always linger, if we don't see people through kingdom eyes.

We can often forget we are all loved and made in the image of God the creator of the universe. As far as the east is from the west God has taken our mess away through his son Jesus.

I would suggest the rock on which the Church was to be built is not Peter himself but the knowledge that Jesus was the son of God.

We all need to lay that rock, that foundation in our lives. In Hebrew 6 we read that it's a foundation of repentance, faith in God (his Word) and baptism.

Turn towards God, trust by faith in his word and be baptised. We need firm foundations if we are to grow in Christ. But we must move on from these foundations.

God always looks at us and sees the potential we have to fulfil his kingdom purposes. We don't see Jesus dwelling on Peter's mistakes, they both move on. But we need also need to move on with Jesus and the power of Holy Spirit in our lives, and not hide away from who we truly are. We need to let God into the deepest places of our hearts if we are to receive his liberation and freedom.

If you answered the question; 'Who do you say I am?' as Jesus the Messiah then Jesus needs to be the Son of God in every area of our lives. But do we trust in Jesus in our times of loneliness, in those times when we mess up now, and in the future?

We need to remember that we can never fall so far that God cannot find us, or fall so fast that God can't catch us, or fall so hard that God can't put us back together again.¹

God through Jesus is always offering his hand of grace and mercy to us.

If Jesus is Lord, then he is Lord of our finances, Lord in our relationships, Lord in the workplace and Lord in the countryside and free time. If Jesus is Lord then he needs to be Messiah of all our lives.

But it's hard to let Go of our former lives, that's ok because Jesus has paid the price for all for our mistakes, past present and future. The bar has been set so high that we can never achieve perfection in our own strength, but have to accept God's grace alone.

¹ The supernatural power of forgiveness, Kris and Jason Vallotton

In Mark 8 v 34-38

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

This is another deep passage; 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

In taking up the Cross does it mean only hardship ahead? Do we all have to become missionaries? Well yes, in that we should not be ashamed to say we believe in Jesus, but He calls to us just as we are.

I think it simply means living for Jesus' agenda rather than for our agenda, trying as best as we can to live for his purposes rather than ours alone, the motivation of our hearts should be to see Jesus glorified rather than ourselves. As Seidel said; 'When we try and take God's place issues arise.'

We will still have many questions as Thomas did, and we looked at that in the All Age Service, but we are blessed when we believe, even if we don't see all that Jesus is up to in our lives.

Whatever we acquire on earth however much we amass; will it get us into Heaven? Can we buy our way in?

There is a famous quote by Jim Elliott

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

Jesus is done; It is finished, the price is paid, there is nothing we can do to get into heaven, apart from God's grace.

But what will be remembered in heaven are our acts of kindness and love, how we have forgiven others and shared Gods blessings with others. This will build treasure in Heaven that will never perish.

Some of us may be blessed with one talent or ten but it's how we use all that God had blessed us with. It's not the size of the blessing that matters but our

hearts motivation. But they do say prayers and faith often follow where our money goes.

At the prayer meeting on Friday morning last week we were looking at a passage in John 15, Jesus' prayer was that he wanted you and me to know the fullness of his Joy as we love one another.

It has taken me a life time to work this out, and we don't often hear teaching on how to live well in the blessings of God, in our second-choice worlds.

For Jesus to be our Messiah he also needs to be our joy in the good times, in the times he blesses us, that which we don't know what to do with, when we are just so full of thankfulness for all he has blessed us with materially and spiritually. But more importantly we need to learn to rejoice in all that God blesses us with. Simply because he is God and worthy of all our praise,

Paul had to learn to be content in all situations and occasions, and we need to do the same. Life is difficult it has many ups and downs but through the storms Jesus remains our rock, our salvation. We need to get our hearts in order and take up our cross if we are to be content.

Finally, we move onto the Transfiguration, if Jesus is Lord in our lives then he will take us to places that are scary, difficult, joyful and even confusing, but they will be places to grow in our faith and trust in Jesus.

So, Jesus takes his disciples up a mountain.

9 v 2-6

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Why it is mentioned after 6 days we are not sure, but perhaps they were resting relaxing not rushing, when we rest we trust that Jesus has things under control. We will never know it reality, but they witnessed something so spectacular it blew their minds and Peter was scared witness. He blurts out the first things that came to mind. In Peters normal way.

We have not got time to look at this in detail however, Peter, James and John still did not understand what Jesus meant by rising from the dead. We do, but we are waiting for his return and still have things unanswered in our lives.

There will always be things we still don't understand about Jesus and our faith, but like Peter with all our mistakes and mess, must pick up our cross and allow Jesus to guide our lives through his Holy Spirit. We must hold onto the fact that God is good even when we don't understand, and allow Gods love to drive out fear so that we can know Gods joy. And know that Jesus is the son of God.

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