

Reflection on Mark 8:27-38

On this Sunday, Jesus and his disciples set out to journey to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Perhaps he also was curious to know what people thought and said about him. The disciples replied: "Some say John the Baptist. Others say you are Elijah or one of the prophets." Jesus then shifted the focus. He asked: "But who do you say that I am?" Naturally, it was Peter who answered his question. He simply said: "You are the Christ."

Then Jesus began to teach his disciples. However, the words he spoke must have been shocking to the disciples. He told them that the Son of Man would suffer and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes. He then would be killed. Yet he would rise after three days! Imagine what was going through the disciples' minds and hearts as they listened to Jesus. They must have been shocked, dismayed and afraid. And what did Jesus mean when he said: "He would rise on the third day?"

Peter could not tolerate hearing all of this. He took Jesus aside and rebuked him for saying all these wild things. Jesus looked directly at his disciples and then he turned back to Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking as God thinks but as human beings think!"

Jesus said to the disciples: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny him/herself. Then take up their cross and follow me! If you strive to save your life, you will lose it. However, if you lose your life for my sake and for that of the Gospel, you will save your life."

Today Jesus asks us: "Who do you say that I am?" Take a few moments and seriously ask yourself: Who do I say Jesus is? Who is he to me? Is he simply a man that lived over 2,000 years ago? Or is Jesus real to me? Ask yourself: How does Jesus and his teaching and example of self-sacrificing love, affect my daily choices and actions? Is the impact significant? Or is it minor?

Answering Jesus' question may clarify for us who Jesus is for us today! Hopefully we will reiterate Peter's response: "You are the Christ."