

Sunday Sermon: September 16, 2018

Sermon Text: Mark 8: 27-35

Sermon Theme: A Confession that Matters

1. A Confession that Leads to Crosses
2. A Confession that Leads to the Cross

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

<sup>28</sup> They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

<sup>29</sup> “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> 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.”

<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

In your life, what is worth defending even if it meant you would die? Is your property and possessions worth defending if it means you might die or get hurt? Is your family worth defending? Are your opinions worth defending to death?

The skill of knowing what to defend and what we don’t need to defend is very important for us to have. It can be very sad to see people get hurt or lose their lives to defend possessions that can be replaced. It is very sad when people resort to arguments and violence defending their own opinions.

What should you hold onto and defend even if it means death?

In the Word of God before us this morning, Jesus tells us that one thing is worth defending. Our confession of faith that Jesus is our Savior matters and defending it matters. Jesus shows us that this confession of faith will bring crosses into our life, but it is also the confession that leads us to the cross to show us what Jesus has done to save us.

Today most parents have the buzzword “teachable moments” etched into their brains. Almost all books on parenting remind parents to be looking for those moments when the children are the most open to learning a new concept or idea. These moments don’t always happen when you plan for them or expect them. The books teach that a parent should be ready all the time for those teachable moments.

Jesus was a master of the teachable moments. Some of his most profound teachings were related to what was going on around him at any given time. He used the job of fishing to describe to his newly called disciples that they would now be fishing for men instead of fish. He used a night of bad fishing to teach trust in God with the miracle of a catch of fish. He used a crowd of 10,000 hungry people and a young boy’s lunch to teach the power and love that God has. He used knowledge of agriculture and farming to teach many lessons about the kingdom of God and what the Messiah would do for his people. The list could go on and on.

Jesus often used these teachable moments to teach his disciples valuable lessons about who he was and what he was going to do to save the world. And so it happened that one day when Jesus and his disciples were traveling where Jesus takes the moment to teach his disciples.

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As they were walking along Jesus asks his disciples for the gossip, the whispers, scuttlebutt. **Who do people say I am?** Then after their replies he asks them for the truth. **Who do you say I am?**

Jesus is showing them what is important. It wasn't important to know what others said and defend against it. It was important to know who he was and believe in him. But then he tells them not to tell anyone..... Why would he do that?

Was it because it wasn't important enough? Was it because the good news of the Savior wasn't worth defending? Not at all. This confession was the one that really mattered.

Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone because at this point they are not ready to preach and teach about this truth. They did not fully understand what Jesus being the Messiah actually meant. They had more to see, hear and experience. They had more to learn. Jesus says something similar after his transfiguration. When they were coming down from the mountain, he tells Peter, James and John not to say anything about it until he has been raised from the dead.

When the disciples learning came to a completion, when they not only had the facts, but also knew what all this meant. After they had seen him suffer, die and rise again, then they would be able to go out with the Holy Spirit and preach and teach with authority and defend the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior.

But they weren't ready yet. They weren't ready to teach and defend this confession.

**<sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.**

While they knew who Jesus was, he was the Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah sent from heaven, they were not ready to defend that confession of faith when crosses came into their life.

In the disciples' case, there was a pretty small cross right away. The time was growing short in Jesus' earthly ministry, so he begins to teach them plainly what will happen to him. They didn't like Jesus, their master, talking like this. They didn't like him saying that he would be mistreated, arrested, and finally killed. Peter pulls Jesus aside and rebukes him. The very things that the Old Testament said must happen, were the things that they didn't want to hear. Jesus teaches them that there would be more crosses in their life because they believed in him and called him the Savior.

**<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.**

They did not know it yet, but this confession that Jesus is the Savior, the Christ, would lead these disciples all over the countryside. It would lead them all over the world. They would take that confession to many people in many places and many people would come to faith in Jesus through this Gospel message. But this confession would also be the reason that there would be much sorrow and trouble in their lives. Confessing that Jesus is the Savior would lead to persecution of all kinds, imprisonment and even death for 10 of those disciples who were sitting there listening that day. This confession would lead to crosses in the life of those who were faithful to it.

What crosses do you bear in the name of Jesus? These are not the problems of everyday life, these are the burdens we bear because we are believers who confess that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Is there some resentment from others? Are there some hushed tones when you go by because people know your religious beliefs? Has the cross of Christ caused problems in your family? Has the cross of Christ caused you problems because of the labels that are slapped on you because you are Christian?

Jesus says for those believe in him as the only way to heaven, they will face crosses because of their faith. The confession that Jesus is our only Savior and our only way to heaven will not be pleasing to the ears of people who want the easy way to heaven or the polite way to heaven. 2000 years before it ever occurred Jesus told us that the faith we confess would be politically, socially and (in some people's minds) morally incorrect..... and he told us that confessing that he our Savior would cause us problems.

Or is this a confession that you are not willing to defend? Does none of this happen because you save your faith for an hour on Sunday (maybe 2 if you go to Bible Class)? Do you talk and act like everyone else because it is easier?

Jesus says that playing it safe, is not the answer. A Christian who believes in him, is a person of action. They are living their faith, not hiding it. Jesus tells us the way to do that is to deny the temptation that it is easiest to keep our faith separate from our outside lives. Instead he tells us to welcome these crosses, to willingly and readily take them on ourselves, knowing that they are coming, and follow him in faith.

Jesus' words here are not without hope. Yes, our confession of faith will lead to crosses in life, but our confession of faith is also the only thing that leads to the cross to see our one and only Savior to save us.

As we confess our faith, it is not in a man named Jesus, we also confess what he did for us on the cross, what he won for us and what he gives to us. There are numerous people throughout history who have been put to death for what they believed. 10 of the disciples were, Joan of Arc was, many of the reformers were, but Jesus is different. But we confess that Jesus' death was so much different. We believe that Jesus death on a cross means our life forever in heaven.

Jesus went to the cross to defend us from all of the terrible tortures that that devil has waiting for those who do not believe. Jesus went to the cross to pay for the sins of the world with his own body and blood. He went there to sacrifice himself, so that when we confess that we have a Savior who died to take away our sins, that we would not be confessing empty words. We would be confessing the truth of salvation.

Jesus went to the cross to win forgiveness and eternal life for us. He went to the cross so that we would not be afraid when the crosses come in life because we know that the final chapter of our life is sealed in his blood which was shed on the cross. He his suffering and death on the cross he has opened the doors to heaven for us.

This is a confession of faith that matters. This is the confession of faith that Peter gave on this day to Jesus. It is the confession of faith that he and the rest of the apostles defended and died for . It is the confession that we hold to today. Jesus is the Christ, our Savior. This confession brings crosses into our life, but it also leads us to the joys and blessing that Christ won for us on the cross and gives to us now.