



**THE RIGHT ANSWER,
BUT FOR THE WRONG REASON (MARK 8:27-35)**

The incident at Caesarea Philippi is the turning point in Mark's narrative. The city is at the most northerly point of Israel, and from there Jesus and his disciples will make the journey to Jerusalem.

It is also the point at which Jesus will begin to speak clearly about the suffering and death which await him there. So, he asks his followers the question which runs through the Gospel of Mark, "Who do people say I am?" Peter, the spokesperson for the group, gives the correct answer, "You are the Christ" (or "the Messiah"). This is the first time a human being has used the title about Jesus, and Jesus imposes the strict order to keep silence once more.

But Jesus does not openly accept Peter's declaration: on a human level (and Mark gives no indication of divine revelation, unlike Matthew), Peter may have concluded that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah on the evidence of Jesus' works of power ("miracles"), so he has come to the correct answer for the wrong reason. To attract a following on the basis of being identified as the Messiah would also possibly bring danger from the political and military authorities. So on different levels, Jesus' command to silence makes sense, and then he goes on to explain what being God's Messiah will mean: being rejected, suffering, put to death and raised, a suffering Messiah, which was not what the Jewish people were expecting. Jesus rebukes Peter severely for trying to deflect him from this path. ■

LEARN

Caesarea Philippi is a city at the northernmost tip of the land of Israel.

Christ and Messiah mean the same thing: "anointed".

Christ is the Greek term; Messiah is the Hebrew form.

REFLECT

All through Mark's narrative up to this point, a question about Jesus has kept recurring in various forms: "Who is this...?" This is not simply part of the historical story: it is addressed to each one of us. We may well have a great deal of sympathy with Peter's reaction on hearing what was in store for his master and friend, and Jesus' teaching is directed to ourselves as well. It can be difficult to see how Jesus' passion and crucifixion could be part of God's plan without turning God into a tyrant who can only be appeased by a human sacrifice – and of God's own Son, at that. Perhaps it might help us to remember that the Gospels are written in the light of the resurrection and after reflecting on passages in the Prophets and Psalms which make sense of Jesus' experience. Thus, the passion and Calvary are not predetermined: the elders, chief priests and scribes – and Pilate – have free will. What brings about the tragedy is human malice, not the divine will. The cross is the sign of Jesus' dedication to his mission and of the extent to which God is prepared to go in reaching out to human beings. It may seem like avoiding the question to say that all this is a mystery: a mystery is simply something that we will never fully comprehend, but must keep on trying to understand; that is what being a disciple (student) is all about. ■

SAY

Who do I think the Son of Man is?

DO

Put some olive or vegetable oil on your hand, or observe it when you use it in the kitchen: think about how Jesus is the Christ, Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Reflect on what this means to you.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you,
that your prophets be found true.
Hear the prayers of your servant,
and of your people Israel.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and, that we may feel the working of your
mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 50:5-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord has opened my ear.

For my part, I made no resistance,
neither did I turn away.
I offered my back to those who struck me,
my cheeks to those who tore at my beard;
I did not cover my face
against insult and spittle.

The Lord comes to my help,
so that I am untouched by the insults.
So, too, I set my face like flint;
I know I shall not be shamed.

My vindicator is here at hand. Does anyone
start proceedings against me?
Then let us go to court together.
Who thinks he has a case against me?
Let him approach me.
The Lord is coming to my help,
who dare condemn me?

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 114

Response:
I will walk in the presence of the Lord,
in the land of the living
or
Alleluia!

1. I love the Lord for he has heard
the cry of my appeal;
for he turned his ear to me
in the day when I called him. (R.)
2. They surrounded me, the snares of death,
with the anguish of the tomb;
they caught me, sorrow and distress.
I called on the Lord's name.
O Lord my God, deliver me! (R.)
3. How gracious is the Lord, and just;
our God has compassion.
The Lord protects the simple hearts;
I was helpless so he saved me. (R.)
4. He has kept my soul from death,
my eyes from tears
and my feet from stumbling.
I will walk in the presence of the Lord
in the land of the living. (R.)

SECOND READING

James 2:14-18

A reading from the letter of St James.

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who
has never done a single good act but claims
that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If
one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in
need of clothes and has not enough food to
live on, and one of you says to them, "I wish
you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,"
without giving them these bare necessities of
life, then what good is that? Faith is like that:
if good works do not go with it, it is quite
dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that
kind: "You say you have faith and I have good
deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith
by showing you my good deeds – now you
prove to me that you have faith without any
good deeds to show."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, says the
Lord;
no one can come to the Father except
through me.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 8:27-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages
round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he
put this question to his disciples, "Who do
people say I am?" And they told him. "John
the Baptist," they said, "others Elijah; others
again, one of the prophets." "But you," he
asked "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke
up and said to him, "You are the Christ." And
he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone
about him.

And he began to teach them that the Son
of Man was destined to suffer grievously,
to be rejected by the elders and the chief
priests and the scribes, and to be put to
death, and after three days to rise again; and
he said all this quite openly. Then, taking
him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with
him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he
rebuked Peter and said to him, "Get behind
me, Satan! Because the way you think is not
God's way but man's."

He called the people and his disciples
to him and said, "If anyone wants to be a
follower of mine, let him renounce himself
and take up his cross and follow me. For
anyone who wants to save his life will lose
it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake,
and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour on our supplications, O Lord,
and in your kindness accept these, your
servants' offerings,
that what each has offered to the honour of
your name
may serve the salvation of all.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

How precious is your mercy, O God!
The children of men seek shelter in the
shadow of your wings.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the working of this heavenly gift, O Lord,
we pray,
take possession of our minds and bodies,
so that its effects, and not our own desires,
may always prevail in us.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.