



Mark 8:27-35

27 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?' **28** And they told him, 'John the Baptist,' they said, 'others Elijah; others again, one of the prophets.' **29** 'But you,' he asked, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' **30** And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him.

31 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; **32** and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter started to remonstrate with him. **33** 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.'

34 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. **35** 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.'

Other readings: Isaiah 50:5-9 Psalm 114 (116) James 2:14-18

The story told in this passage lies at the very heart of the drama of Mark's gospel. The question about the identity of Jesus is really a question about why he has come. People thought back to the great figures in the long history of the Jewish people as they attempted to understand the mission of Jesus. Jesus indeed shares the passion for the truth of John the Baptist, the strength and power of Elijah, and the spiritual qualities of other prophets. But Peter makes a greater claim for Jesus. He is the Messiah!

Jesus' reaction should be considered with care. He neither welcomes Peter's assertion nor rejects it. Jesus speaks for the first time of his suffering, death and resurrection. In doing so he challenges Peter's expectations about the Messiah, which were no doubt shared by others. The Messiah will not claim power for himself; he will not dominate others. On the contrary, others will have power over him; he will be dominated.

In giving up his life Jesus opens up a new way, a new vision, a vision of self-giving love. From this point onwards the Gospel of Mark will draw us inexorably into the mystery of the cross, the mystery of God's love revealed in the human life of the Son of God, which explains the meaning and purpose of our own lives too.

Who is Jesus for me?

Am I willing to accept Jesus' words about the cross?

Let us pray for fidelity and courage as we discover more about God's purposes.

Let us pray for all disciples of the Lord.