**Peter rebuked by Jesus**  9/6/24dkm

Read: Matthew 4:1-17, Mark 8:27-38

Text: Mark 8:31-33

Psalms: 148:1-6, 16:7-11, 108:1-6, 117

The English bishop J C Ryle wrote:
‘On matters of church government, and the form of worship, men may differ from us, and yet reach heaven in safety. On the matter of Christ’s atoning death, as the way of peace, truth is only one. If we are wrong here, we are ruined forever. Error on many points is only a skin disease; error about Christ’s death is a disease of the heart. Here let us take our stand. Let nothing move us from this ground. The sum of all our hopes must be, that “Christ has died for us” (1 Thess. 5:10). Give up that doctrine, and we have no solid hope at all﻿.’

Jesus asked his disciples, ‘Who do you say that I am’? Peter, as the spokesman for the apostles, answered, ‘You are the Christ’ (8:29). Jesus was overjoyed at hearing such a confession; he called Peter ‘blessed’ (Mat 16:17). These men whom he prayerfully chose and nurtured as apostles at last understood that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. And more than that, as Messiah he was the Son of the living God (Mat 16:16). Peter knew what the Bible said about Messiah - or thought he did! But only God himself could reveal such truth to Peter, or any person.

Peter saw Roman soldiers roaming the streets of his city, unclean Gentiles as they were. Like other Jews, he hoped that Messiah would deliver his nation from this oppression. He understood Messiah as a political deliverer, a deliverer from the oppression of men. Jesus was doing mighty works and preaching about the kingdom of God, as he expected Messiah would do. Peter did not understand ‘Messiah’ in terms of Isaiah 53; if so, he would have been the only Jew who did. But it is this very truth that Jesus now turns to, the truth of the suffering servant, and the lamb led to the slaughter (8:31).

When Jesus tells his disciples about the mission of Messiah, they are shocked to say the least. The great confession of Peter is followed by a great rebuke from Jesus. Those who hail Peter as the first pope should take note that here in this same chapter Jesus said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ (8:33). We are not saying Peter was condemned, although some of the popes most probably were, but let us remember that Peter was a fallible man standing before the infallible and holy Son of God. Through testing and the grace of God, Peter, along with the other apostles, became a founder and leader of the church.

The focus of these few verses is on Jesus himself and his understanding of his mission, before turning to Peter who epitomises man’s thinking with regard to the mission of Jesus in this world.

**1. Mission of Jesus**

‘He began to teach them’, or as Matthew writes, ‘From that time on’ (8:31, Mat 16:21). Peter’s confession gave Jesus the confidence to share more of his mission with his disciples. Jesus has been focused on teaching his small band of disciples for some time. He took them to Tyre and Sidon, and to the Decapolis, and was now in Caesarea Philippi with them (8:27). Finally, the penny has dropped as we say, and they saw that Jesus was Messiah- what the Bible says is that this was revealed to them by God (Mat 16:17).

But this newly acknowledged Messiah had not yet completed his mission on earth. Healing the sick and casting out demons, and feeding hungry hordes, was not the end of his mission in this world. The disciples may have thought it was- they certainly weren’t ready for his imminent departure from this world. Still today, many welcome Christ bringing an end to suffering in this world, an end to sickness and poverty. Many welcome Christmas, but find the cross of Easter offensive. Peter and his fellow disciples had no idea about the cross. How about you? Do you understand why Jesus had to die? He tells his disciples that he must be killed (8:31). How could someone doing good works day in and day out, be killed? How indeed! Jesus tells them how, but his focus is on the why? He ‘must go to Jerusalem’ (Mat 16:21).

Jerusalem was the holy city of the Jews because of the temple. In the time of Jesus it was the second temple, the magnificent structure built by Herod. This temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD70; today there is no temple, just the foundations. Jerusalem is still the holy city for the Jews, who hope to rebuild the temple. Some Christians have this hope also, while Muslims want to preserve the mosque built at this site. Is it any wonder Jerusalem is in the news almost every day! In the time of Jesus, it was just the Jews and the Romans fighting over Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was the home of the priests, the men who made the sacrifices and burnt incense in daily worship at the temple. Jerusalem was the home of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. Both Sadducees and Pharisees were represented in this council; most priests were Sadducees, while many scribes or lawyers were Pharisees. The elders were originally tribal heads or heads of clans within the tribes. The meeting of seventy men from these different parties was usually hostile, but they became united in the matter of opposing Jesus. Think of our parliament and the bitter divisions in normal business, but when it came to opposing the teaching of the Bible about marriage, they became united.

Jesus had to go to Jerusalem and ‘suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed’ (8:31). This is first of three occasions on which Jesus told his disciples of his mission (cf. 9:31, 10:33). Mark refers to Jesus as ‘the Son of Man’ because Jesus referred to himself by this title. This title, which is found in the OT (Dan 13:14), was adopted by Jesus probably because it was not as ‘loaded’ with misunderstandings as the title Messiah. ‘Son of Man’ combined the idea one coming from heaven with power and glory, as well as the idea of suffering and death.

Why did Jesus have to suffer? Well, this is what was written in the OT: ‘He was oppressed and afflicted’ (Isa 53:7). This was also why he had to ‘be killed’- it was written; but more than this it was because,

‘Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness’ (Heb 9:22). Jesus would not die by accident, by sickness or disease. He would be killed. A man is not killed by people who love him; he is killed by those who hate him. The difficulty for Peter, and for us, is that a man doing only good, a man who did no wrong, could be hated so much, and could suffer so much at the hands of men. There has never been another sinless man so we cannot compare Jesus with anyone else.

What we see with Jesus is the wicked hating the righteous- the Righteous One. What we see is people hating the light because their deeds are evil (John 3:20). What we see is people hating the commands of God because they love sin. The men intent on making Jesus suffer were actually religious and political leaders. In the end they had the whole city shouting, ‘Crucify him, crucify him’ (Luke 23:20). Do you think you would have been the only one not shouting if you were there? Do you think you would have been any better than Peter if invited into the luxurious house of the high priest as he was?

Jesus told his disciples he must suffer many things at the hands of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. It would be some time before Jesus set out for Jerusalem, but there was no avoiding this city. Jerusalem was the place where prophets suffered and died (Mat 23:37). Jesus did not at this time indicate how he would be killed, but when he reminded them for the third time, he went into more detail (10:33, Mat 20:19).

Jesus must go to Jerusalem, he must suffer, he must be killed and finally he must ‘after three days rise again’ (8:31). Although this is the first time Jesus tells to his disciples he must rise from the dead, in speaking of the sign of Jonah he alluded to being raised after three days. The disciples would, like Martha, have believed in the general resurrection at the last day (John 11:24) but Jesus was not really talking about this resurrection; he was talking about his own rising again after three days.

These are the central truths of the gospel: the suffering, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ - we could include the ascension along with his resurrection. We have heard Jesus saying that these things must happen to him; they are things ordained by his Father. They are the things for which he came into this world. Why must these things happen to Jesus? They must happen because of you and your sin! This is the truth of the gospel. The disciples did not as yet understand why Jesus must suffer and be killed- I pray you do.

**2. Man’s thought**

The disciples clearly heard what Jesus said because he spoke openly (8:32), but they could not imagine such things happening to their beloved rabbi. They now accepted that he was Messiah, the Son of the living God, but could not accept that he must suffer and be killed. That he would be raised on the third day was completely beyond them. Again, it was Peter who stepped forward to speak to Jesus. He was not answering a question- there was no question from Jesus. He was not asking a question of Jesus either. Rather, Peter took Jesus aside and ‘began to rebuke Him’ (8:32).

How amazing! How bold! How arrogant! Matthew records what Peter said to Jesus; Mark only records what Jesus said to Peter. ‘Peter’s strong will and warm heart, linked to his ignorance, produced this shocking bit of arrogance. He confessed that Jesus was Messiah and then spoke in a way implying he knew more of God’s will than the Messiah himself’. Arrogance is often the result of ignorance, as well as pride.

Peter’s arrogant rebuke of Jesus was not the first nor the last of such arrogance towards the Lord and the Bible. Lots of people think they know better than what is written in the Bible; I trust you are not one of them. Peter addressed Jesus as ‘Lord’, but his words showed little understanding of what he actually said. ‘This will never happen to you’ said Peter, after Jesus his Lord solemnly declared he must suffer and be killed (Mat 16:22).

Before Peter could say anything else, and further incriminate himself, Jesus turned to rebuke Peter. While looking at all his disciples, he rebuked Peter (8:33). There are a couple of parts to his rebuke. Firstly, he said, ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ (8:33). Jesus recognised the words of Peter as being like those he heard in the desert, words tempting him to avoid the cross, the words of Satan (Mat 4:10). Yes, Satan can speak through human beings- in fact he usually speaks in this way.

Jesus knew the mission for which his Father sent him into the world. He knew the ‘must do’ will of God. When Peter ventured to oppose the will of God, Jesus rebuked him saying, ‘Get behind me Satan’. If someone tells us to do something contrary to the word of God -divorce your spouse for example- we should recognise the source of this suggestion and say, ‘Get behind me Satan’.

Secondly, Jesus rebuked Peter for thinking like a man, and not being mindful of the things of God (8:33). The way of the cross was not devised by a human mind. The sinful human mind can, and does, devise ways of works- righteousness, or law-righteousness, but such ways always fail because of sin. Sin prevents man from keeping the righteous law of God. Because of sin, good works are always tarnished by bad works. Just look at Peter and the other apostles.

We must put behind us the thinking of man and start ‘thinking God’s thoughts after Him’ as someone has said. If you think that being religious or doing good works will save you, or will in some way contribute to your salvation, then listen to the rebuke of Jesus. If you are saying with Peter, ‘God forbid that Jesus being killed has anything to do with my going to heaven’, then read on and listen to the ‘new’ Peter saying of Jesus, ‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness- by whose stripes you were healed’ (1Peter 2:24). By the grace of God, Peter recovered from this stumble and rebuke from Jesus to write this wonderful summary of the gospel. Let us not stumble over the cross- it is the only way of salvation.