

## 022524 English Sermon "Set Your Mind On Divine Things" Mark 8:31-35

Today we celebrate the second Sunday of Lent. The Gospel given to us today is from Chapter 8 of the Gospel of Mark. I pray that you will examine your faith through today's Word and participate in the grace of God bestowed upon you this week.

Right before today's story, Jesus greatly praised Peter. He asked His disciples "Who do people say I am?" "Who do you say I am?" Peter gave a great answer: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." At that moment, Peter, led by the Holy Spirit, confessed his faith in the Lord. Peter and the other disciples understood that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. However, they didn't know what all of that meant.

After letting His disciples know that He is the Messiah, Jesus teaches them about His suffering, death, and resurrection. In the Gospels, he spoke about this not once, but three times. Each time he spoke about suffering and death, he also spoke about the resurrection, which the disciples could not understand at all until then. In their mind, the Messiah would conquer the Romans and save Israel from them. The disciples could not accept as their Messiah someone who is powerlessly punished and died. They thought that the Messiah should be the ultimate victor and would rule the world. They only thought of glory without suffering.

Coming from this understanding, Peter responded to Jesus when He said He would have to die: "Lord! This must never happen to you." In verse 33, it says that Peter took Him aside and began to "rebuke" Him. This word is a Greek word, "Epitimaō." It refers to criticizing or rebuking others. When Peter was told that Jesus would die on the cross, he opposed him with a strong tone of rebuke. He was objecting that the prophecy cannot be fulfilled if the Messiah dies. He said it this way because he didn't understand the work of God, i.e. God's plan for salvation.

Peter couldn't conceive of Jesus' death and what's beyond it. He didn't know about the ultimate victory over sin and death. But Jesus said that He first needed to be on the cross in order to save the sinners. Only then He would conquer death and come back to life to lead His people to the Kingdom of God. We often do not understand divine things, God's time and God's way. In such times, we complain. We complain about our circumstances, about people around us, and eventually to God too. "God, why are you doing this to me?" But we complain this way because we don't understand God's plan for us.

When Peter opposed Jesus, Jesus rebuked Peter. Verse 33 says, "Get behind me, Satan!" Jesus did not call Peter Satan, but he was speaking to a spiritual being who was influencing Peter's thoughts. Again verse 33 says, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

"Divine things" referred to here often refers to a right relationship with God. Getting right with God isn't something we can do, it is what God has done for us; when we accept that God made us right with God, we have faith. We are justified—made right—by faith.

### **Story behind the song: 'A Mighty Fortress is our God'**

We think of Martin Luther as a great reformer, Bible translator, fiery preacher, and theologian. But he was also a musician, having been born in an area of Germany known for its music. There in his little Thuringian village, young Martin grew up listening to his mother sing. He joined a boys' choir that sang at weddings and funerals. He became proficient with the flute.

On a cold, windy night in the early 1500s, Martin Luther came very near being hit by a bolt of lightning during a thunderstorm. Following his close call

with death, he changed his course of study from law to theology.

Through his studies, he discovered that true Christianity did not depend upon what one knows about God, but upon a right personal relationship with God. God's forgiveness through the sacrificial death of Christ became all important to Luther.

One day he thought, "If only I could make the pilgrimage to Rome..."

That dream was fulfilled, and while crawling up a staircase called Scala Sancta on his knees, he remembered the verse of scripture, "The just shall live by faith." He sprang to his feet, ran back down the stairs, and the Reformation began.

The greatest work that Luther accomplished was the translation of the New Testament into the language of the people. Then to the amazement of everyone, Luther began to write hymns and gospel songs. The people sang them with great fervor. Luther preached long and hard, becoming a forceful leader of one of the world's greatest spiritual awakenings.

Luther's one of the most famous hymns is "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott," – "A Mighty Fortress is our God." Based on Psalm 46, it reflects Luther's awareness of our intense struggle with Satan. In difficulty and danger, Luther would often resort to this song, saying to his associate, "Come, Phillip, let us sing the 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm."

On the base of Luther's tomb is inscribed, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. It is said to be the greatest hymn of the greatest man in the greatest period in German history. Psalm 46:1 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, Jesus did not only speak of suffering and death, but also promised resurrection and eternal life. Put your

trust in the Lord and get right with God. God is your refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.