

YOU ARE THE CHRIST

Mark 8:27-33

Key Verse: 8:29

"`But what about you?' he asked. `Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, `You are the Christ.'"

Last Sunday we thought about "some people" from Bethsaida who brought a blind man to Jesus. Jesus and his disciples finally had a quiet moment after a long time of sufferings thus far from forest-like begging hands on all occasions. Then "some people" brought a blind man and surprised Jesus and his disciples. They supposed another forest of begging hands would follow. But there was no such commotion. Jesus saw in the people of Bethsaida deep friendship for a blind man. Jesus healed him. We learned a deep friendship from the people in Bethsaida. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 say, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" These verses tell us that men's relationships bear fruit and mutually build up. There is no such relationship among trees or animals. Some female lions throw their cubs down from the top of the high mountain to the rocky bottom below. They say that it is for [training](#), that a lion has to be a lion. But in fact, strong lionesses are bothered too much by cub lions. So this is why they throw them from the top of the mountain to the bottom, more than for the purpose [of training](#). If human relationships cannot be formed among humankind, it is indeed miserable. Albert Camus (1913-1960), an eminent existential novelist, wrote a work with the title "La Peste." Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) wrote "Nausea." When men see into themselves or among themselves, they only find pest-like danger and sufferings and utter corruption which destroys mankind. Man's friendship-even if it is "some people's" friendship with a blind man-has to be friendship with God first, and next, friendship among men, and finally, friendship with other nations as their own family members. May God raise America as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation so that we may have a godly friendship in ourselves and see all the peoples of all nations who are suffering as our own brothers and sisters. This is God's imperative for Americans, especially we Americans living in this generation. Friendship makes us bear much fruit and friendship builds up with no limitation. But it has to be friendship in God.

Today's passage is the turning point of Mark's Gospel from part one to part two. The content is Peter's beautiful confession of Christ and his rebuking of Christ. Most importantly, for the first time, Jesus tells his disciples the meaning of his death. May God richly bless you to study the second part of Mark's Gospel and accept Jesus as the Son of God and Jesus as the Christ.

I. Peter's confession of Christ (27-30)

It had already been three years since Peter left his net on the seashore and followed Jesus. But when we study Peter's confession we learn that he had a double desire in following Jesus. When Jesus called him, "Follow me," he immediately followed him, leaving everything behind-even his wife and mother-in-law and his business. We are surprised by his leaving everything and following Jesus immediately. It may be that his

decision was firmly made to follow Jesus. It may be that he found his human hope in Jesus. Anyway, his leaving everything and following Jesus immediately greatly surprises us.

After that, Peter received much training by Jesus. Jesus first taught him who he was. Through Jesus' holy life and miracle performances and dialogue, and in every way, Peter could not but believe that Jesus is the Son of God. After almost three years of common life and suffering together, Jesus tested his disciples to see if they perceived that Jesus is the Son of God. Look at verse 27. "Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?'" This was an objective question. Jesus wanted to know how people thought of Jesus. And they replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." It is remarkable that even ordinary people, who tightly clung to their hand to mouth existence, and who came to Jesus for healing, sensed that Jesus was more than a man; he was one of the prophets. They did not know the name of God well. On the other hand, they knew the names of the prophets so well. So, "Some said, 'John the Baptist;' others said 'Elijah;' and still others, 'one of the prophets.'" They thought prophets were from God and whenever they had a prophet they could live peacefully. So they had a great respect for the prophets as the servants of God. Jesus' influence and Jesus' messianic compassion moved his people to say that Jesus is one of the prophets.

Next, Jesus gave his disciples a subjective question: "'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'" (29) Peter stood up and clenched his fist and spoke from his lungs, "You are the Christ." Peter usually got a B-average. But for the first time he got an A++. His confession was very correct Peter's confession was really the core of the gospel and his confession pinpointed exactly the answer Jesus wanted to hear. What he really said is that Jesus is the Son of God.

There were many highly educated people. They were the Pharisees and the teachers of the law and the Sadducees. They knew the Bible so well. The Bible is focused on the coming of the Messiah. But they were not the ones who confessed Jesus as the Christ. Rather, by studying the Bible they became the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The Sadducees were rich. They were well-to-do at the time of his people's suffering. But they were like some blind people who went to the zoo and touched an elephant. One said the elephant was like a wall. The other said the elephant was like big tree trunk. Still the other said the elephant had an enormous tail. When he said "tail," he meant the elephant's trunk. They went to the zoo and touched the elephant, but all were partial and didn't find the whole picture of the elephant. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law and the secular humanistic Sadducees were like these blind men in their Bible study. In order to become a Pharisee, one had to start Bible study at a young age. He had to memorize the Pentateuch and all kinds of traditions of the Jews and rules and regulations. Moreover, they had to study the sophisticated Talmud. They had to pass examinations which were harder to pass than to be elected Senator of New York. In order to become a Pharisee one had to stay up late every night until all their teenage time was over. In this way, they studied the Bible and memorized the rules concerning the Bible and their traditions. But their purpose was not to master the Bible or to know God. Their purpose was to pass the test and become Pharisees and to become highly regarded persons in their

community. Their purpose of study was completely wrong. There were two Korean middle school students. They studied basic English every evening from 7-11 p.m. and almost memorized each lesson. But their purpose was to get good scores and after the examination they completely forgot what they had studied. On the other hand, a factory boy was very hungry to learn. So he overheard these boys' English study over their shoulders. He had a clear purpose to learn English. He memorized together with them and remembered and understood basic English so well. The two students who studied so diligently failed to enter college because their purpose was false. On the other hand, the factory boy who studied English over their shoulders finally became an English Bible teacher to English speaking people. To a man, purpose is very important. One's purpose of life must be right. If you are studying or mastering some skills, your purpose should be for the glory of God. Otherwise, mastering many kinds of skills will be meaningless. Ecclesiastes 3:22 says, "So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?" The author of Ecclesiastes learned that hard work is the best meaning of man's life. But he was very sorrowful that workaholics do not know what will happen in their futures. Yasunari Kawabata received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1968 for his novels. His novels were mostly descriptions of woman's beauty, especially the beauty of Japanese women. After receiving the Nobel Prize, he learned that beautiful women were getting old and not becoming beautiful anymore. His description of woman's beauty had no meaning for him anymore. He committed suicide while the people of the nation were celebrating by drinking and dancing and had opened restaurants free of charge; they thought his Nobel Prize was a national joy and pride. But Kawabata committed suicide. He wrote about woman's beauty so beautifully but without any purpose. When he found no meaning and purpose of beauty, he despaired and he committed suicide while the people of the nation were enjoying parties to celebrate his Nobel Prize. In life, purpose is very important.

Jewish people, especially Jewish elites, did not know their purpose of becoming Pharisees through so many heavy examinations and so much training to be exemplary in their communities. They were called to be a chosen people, a [kingdom of](#) priests and a holy nation. But they only became selfish and egocentric and finally useless.

We heard Peter's confession, "You are the Christ." His answer was correct. But his purpose was not correct. He thought he gave up everything and followed Jesus, working most and suffering most. But to other disciples, he was eating most and bragging most for nothing. As we know well, "Christ" means "King of kings" and the Almighty Creator God. As Peter confessed, we must each have a confession of Christ, confessing that Jesus is the Christ; Jesus is my King, my Savior. Without a confession to our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is the Christ, we are not real Christians. Without a confession of Christ, we have no King to whom we have to be loyal and give our lives and give our glory. Without a confession of Christ, that Jesus is the Christ, we have no fountain of joy because our Lord Jesus Christ is the fountain of joy who gives us a living hope welling up to eternal life and brings us to his glorious Father's home. We can make a superficial confession of faith so many times and forget about it so many times. Sometimes we do not know what we are doing in the midst of working hard in a real world. There are many who are taking psychiatric drugs. There are many mental patients. There are

many depression patients. There are many workaholics without any joy of life. There are many housewives who do not pray for their children and do not take care of their housework because they have no joy of life having many children. They should think of their children as God's blessings. But they think that their children annoy them. So they go to the working place to justify themselves and make very little money. But they will all go to hell, where burning sulfur is flaming endlessly.

Peter's following Jesus must have been true and sincere. During the course of his following Jesus, he pledged his loyalty to Jesus. His Epistles, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, are poems or epics. How could a fisherman write such epics? It was because he had the compassion of Jesus in his heart and he wanted to be loyal to Jesus always. But there was a problem. He was a man who had a consciousness and a subconsciousness. It is like saying man is good and evil, according to the definition of mankind by St. Paul. When everything is going well, our consciousness confesses that "Jesus is the Christ," and "Jesus is the joy of living," and "I love Jesus more than my wife." But when one has to say something out of his subconsciousness, his real self can be revealed. It is understandable that when Peter left everything and followed Jesus and became a companion of Jesus, he thought Jesus is the Son of God and Jesus would save his country Israel from the bondage of the Roman Empire. More than that, Jesus' mystic deity and unending compassion captured him. So in his consciousness he confessed that Jesus is the Christ. It meant that Jesus is the King. It meant that Jesus is everything to him and he is Jesus' loyal subject.

II. Jesus predicts his death (31-33)

Look at verse 31. "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." This was a new story to his disciples. But it is the old, old story written in the Scriptures. It is as follows: When men fell, God for the time being was sorrowful. But he restored his hope of saving the world. As we studied, God tried to find a chosen people all over the world. But there was no one who could be a chosen people to fulfill his hope. Finally God chose Abraham, who was 75 years old. This man was older than the average age of death at that time. Anyway, he looked to be faithful even though he was old and his wife was barren. God chose him as his chosen people. He began to train him to believe God's promise, that is, God's covenant. Finally, through Jacob, God raised twelve patriarchs who were the twelve leaders of twelve tribes of Israel. God sent so many of his servants the prophets. Among the prophets, Elijah and John the Baptist are outstanding. But his nominal chosen people killed God's servants the prophets out of their worldliness and then decorated their tombs very beautifully. Matthew 23:29 says, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous."

The parable of the tenants reveals God's hope and despair so vividly (Mk 12:1-12). God made a garden and planted a vineyard and made a wall and watchtower and prepared every necessary thing and gave it to his servants to take care of. Then he went far away. God did not want to get taxes or even a proper amount of fruit from them, but only wanted to see that they were doing fruitful work. So he sent his servants. But

each time God sent his servants, the tenants humiliated them. The first time he sent his servants they were beaten up and sent away empty-handed. The second time God sent some of his servants they were struck on the head and treated shamefully. The tenants treated God's servants shamefully. It was unforgivable sin. But God sent more servants, trusting God's image in the tenants. Some of the servants they killed and threw away outside the wall. God was extremely sorrowful that his people did not listen to him and that they also killed his servants. The problem was that they did not understand God's broken shepherd heart for the salvation of all mankind. They forgot that originally the vineyard was God's own possession. It was only rented to them to work hard in and bear much fruit. When they saw the vineyard, it was really fruitful and exceedingly abundant. They became insane. On the other hand, our God still believed that they would not kill his one and only son. So he sent his only son to see the vineyard and whether they were working hard to be fruitful. Then they said, whispering in each others' ears, "Ah! That's the guy, the owner's son. Let's kill him and throw him away outside of the wall." God never believed that they would do so, but they did so. What good and evil human beings! From mankind, good intentions come out when they are abundantly favored. But bad intentions begin to pump out when they become greedy and selfish. One servant of God helped a girl student whose profile was like that of an octopus. He helped her enormously and also provided for her room and board. But these days, her subconsciousness became insane and what she says is despicable and what she does is not good.

Peter looked so courageous and sometimes he was very loyal. But sometimes he was very selfish, especially when they were eating. As a whole, he was Jesus' unique top disciple candidate. He left everything. When we say "everything," it means his fishing business and all the equipment and all the fellow coworkers and his mother-in-law (who lived for her daughter) and his own wife. He began to follow Jesus. Whenever we read about Jesus' calling him and his immediate following, it seems to be indeed remarkable. Sometimes we wonder how could he do so. He also had a subconsciousness. He was a fisherman. But he had his own dream world. When he saw in Jesus a hint of being an earthly messianic king, every day he designed his premier costume and noble and elegant chairs which he would use as premier. He confessed Jesus is the Christ, but his subconsciousness was not changed. In other words, his inner man was not at all changed in Jesus. So when we say we are changed or we repented, we must bear the fruit of repentance and show the evidence of true repentance and true transformation. Otherwise, we cannot recognize our change. Peter's evil desire hidden in his subconsciousness erupted like an earthquake. He took Jesus aside where the other disciples did not see and rebuked Jesus: "Don't die when you did not marry. Don't die when you did not establish the earthly messianic kingdom. We gotta see you pay back what all the evil men have done to you. And we also gotta be compensated as your disciples."

Look at verse 33. "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.'" There are so many things we can learn from here. But one thing is that there are two worlds: the things of God and the things of the world. In other words, the world of God and the world of Satan. There is no middle ground, as many Chinese philosophers urge. Here we must understand Peter. He

did not make a mistake or do anything wrong. But he was in the process of growing spiritually. In other words, we must go through this step of spiritual training. Always, divine discipline is good. Pope John Paul II is a Polish man. He lived under the German occupation and partly the Russian occupation. His country was indeed in deep trouble. When he saw with his eyes that his people were chained and beaten up and sent away to Siberia or to prison camps without food, he decided to be a priest. At his high school graduation time there was a drama performance. It was similar to our monodrama. They memorized several pages of passages and expressed what they were thinking and wanted to do. He competed with one girl. She won first place because her father was the Principal and he got second place. But he did not complain because he said what he wanted to say through Bible passages. Then at the graduation he became the valedictorian and the girl became the salutatorian who introduced him. Pope John Paul II had a mentor. At that time, "mentor" meant "shepherd." His mentor said to him, "If you are going to be a priest, you must know your people. So go to the limestone quarry and work there." There he evangelized many people and also during the daytime he carried heavy stones for four years. Thus he became very strong. In his mind, always some drama was going on and he always remembered how he played soccer with his father in the living room. After four years of stone cutting he came back. Then his mentor said, "You have to go around on foot for the next three years and evangelize people secretly." He did not complain and completed three years of such heavy training and went back to his mentor. The mentor said, "You are cooped up in Poland and your way of thinking is very nationalistic, not Jesus-centered." So he wrote a recommendation letter so that he could study abroad. After this, he sent him to France and broadened his mind and heart. After that, he could see the world from God's point of view and from people's point of view. In other words, he grew as a shepherd-like person. His mentor was a wonderful person even though he made Pope John Paul II suffer much when he was young. Pope John Paul II's greatness is that he never dated. He never responded to a dating invitation. But when the two daughters of the one who got first place in the drama visited the Vatican, he cordially wrote a letter to their mother: "Your two daughters visited me. Why don't you visit me one time?" When she came they shared five minutes of tea time and he sent her back.

We must study the Bible diligently and come to a conclusion that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, Almighty God. We must focus our hope, future, human desire and everything on our confession that Jesus is the Christ. Otherwise, we will be like many who won Nobel Prizes in Literature and committed suicide. It is good to come to our worship service. It is good to come to our UBF Church, sacrificing your fun time. But you should not come for the purpose of satisfying your willpower or pleasing your mentors. You should come to our worship service in order to know Jesus Christ the Son of God, the King of kings and Almighty God. You must confess Jesus is the Christ not only from your consciousness, but also from your subconsciousness. Many people live as though they have no subconsciousness. They are self-deceiving people. We should not be self-deceiving people. We must be true children of God who render glory to God by arriving at the point that we confess Christ from our consciousness and subconsciousness as well.

