

Lenten Devotional March 21, 2021

Scripture

Mark 8:31-9:1

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." 9:1 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Kristin Beckstrom Widrich '04

"And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."

Leave it to Peter. Who but Peter would dare to rebuke Jesus? Brash, impulsive, thick-headed Peter. Peter, so quick to jump out of the boat when he sees Jesus walking toward him on the water, and so quick to sink when he notices the wind. Peter, so quick to draw his sword when the soldiers come to arrest Jesus, and so quick to deny that he even knows him when Jesus stands trial. Peter, so quick to confess that Jesus is the Messiah, and so quick to rebuke him when Jesus explains what that means. Oh, Peter. Rebuking Jesus? Did you really think that you knew better than he?

Of course, I see myself in Peter all the time. More often than I'd like to admit, I catch myself pulling Jesus aside, telling him how it should be. After all, Jesus' way – the way of the Cross – it's not easy. Not for Jesus. Not for Peter. And not for me. I would much prefer to focus on pleasing the crowd than to risk rejection. I would much prefer to alleviate the suffering of others than to endure suffering myself. Like Peter, I set my mind on human things, even when (especially when?) Jesus calls me to focus on the divine.

But this is the fifth Sunday in Lent. In one week, Holy Weeks begins, and we will journey with Jesus, once again, through his suffering, Crucifixion, and death. Jesus has set his face toward Jerusalem, and so shall we.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, your way is not easy. I struggle to deny myself, to take up the cross, to follow you. I need your help and intervention. Thank you for going before me, to show me the way. Thank you for sending your Spirit, to equip and empower. Fix my eyes on you, today and always. Amen.