

## Lenten Devotional March 14, 2024

### Scripture

#### Mark 8:27-9:1

*27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.*

*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."*

*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."*

### Devotion

#### The Rev. Dr. Tom Hoeke '03

One thing that troubles me about the decision to retire is my identity. I know my identities are as a husband, father, grandfather, and son. However, my occupation is where I have spent a lot of time in the last 47, first in secular positions as an information technology manager and then as a United Methodist pastor.

We often define people we meet based on what they do. One of the first questions asked is, "What do you do?" Something similar was happening with the crowd around Jesus. People wanted to define him by what he did. Before this scene, Jesus healed a blind man and a deaf person. For the second time, he multiplied loaves and fish to feed people.

Then Jesus puts his disciples on the spot, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Jesus wants to know if his trusted inner circle has a clue.

Peter says that Jesus is the Messiah. Right answer! However, does he know what it means that Jesus is the Messiah? Jesus doesn't think so and tells him, "You are not thinking God's thoughts, and you are thinking human thoughts." In other words, you are not open to God's ways.

Jesus is a different kind of Messiah than how Peter identifies him. Jesus is the Messiah who brings people back to God. That required his suffering on the cross to take away sins and get all of humanity back into a right relationship with God.

When you think about who Jesus is to you, think about God's purposes and God being in control, even amid hardships and difficulties. Know that the weight Jesus bore on the cross was for you. Trust in his grace, power, and sustaining work in your life. He is the one who can and does change our lives.

Deep down, I know no matter which stage of life I am about to enter, I am always, first and foremost, a child of God. My identity is in God.

What about you? Who do you say Jesus is?

### **Prayer**

Gracious and loving God, thank you for identifying us as your children. We realize nothing is more important than our relationship with you through Christ. We admit that too often, we try to identify others and ourselves according to the world's ways. We pray that you constantly remind us that our identity is in you. In Christ we pray, Amen.