

Lent Devotional March 19, 2026

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 wish to come after me, 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."

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Peter Sutton '24

Today we find ourselves 30 days into the season of Lent. As we close in on the finish line, this is a good time to reflect on whether we have "run with endurance the race that has been set before us" (Heb 12:1).

Here at First (Scots) Presbyterian in Charleston, S.C., we have been exploring this verse with reference to the "great cloud of witnesses" that have gone before us in this historic Lowcountry setting. As we prepare for our 300th anniversary at First (Scots), our aim is to plan for the next 300 years but at the same time hold fast to the strong foundations which others have put in place to help us to continue our witness in the city.

In many ways, today's passage from Mark's gospel is engaged in the same process. Peter's answer to the question "who do you say I am?" is one very much of the present time and indeed anticipates the future. Peter's is an idealized sense of the Messiah which wishes to cut the corners of this race and bypass having to endure the hardships of Holy Week.

Many worshippers joyfully celebrate Palm Sunday and do so again a week later on Easter Day without necessarily exploring the week that the two bookend. The resurrection is embraced without paying due reverence to all those who have gone before—none more so than Christ.

The next verse in the gospel (9:2) leaves us in no doubt about the need to acknowledge our roots. As Christ prepares to set his gaze on Jerusalem, he does so through the Transfiguration, with Elijah and

Moses by his side. May we, too, find strength for the journey that lies ahead by drawing on the witness of those who have gone before us.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

As Christ prepares to set His gaze on Jerusalem, may we set our gaze on Him, acknowledging His perseverance, His ability to endure on our behalf, and the strength He drew from those who had gone before Him, Your true and trusted servants whom we seek to follow.

Amen.