

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: Three Things Jesus Made Very Clear, Mark 8:27-38

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INTRODUCTION: Up to this point, Jesus had traveled quite a way with his band of disciples. They had witnessed him heal people and drive out demons. They had witnessed him feed large crowds by multiplying just a few fish and bread. They saw him interact with Jews and Gentiles. Now they began to realize this man was more than just a rabbi. He was more than just a religious figure of his day.

I have three points to my message today:

1. Jesus made it clear who he was.
2. Jesus made it clear what he must do.
3. Jesus made it clear what he expected from his followers.

First, JESUS MADE IT CLEAR WHO HE WAS.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 8:27-30 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?”*
²⁸ *They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”*
²⁹ *“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”*
Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”
³⁰ *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

EXPLANATION: If we were to ask today, “Who is Jesus,” I doubt anyone would say “John the Baptist” or “Elijah.” Some would say, “He was a prophet.”

Jews, since the time of Jesus and throughout history, see him as one of several people who claimed to be the Messiah. They see him as the most influential of the false prophets. They believe a Messiah will come someday, but they do not believe a man can be God, and they reject the Trinity.

I want to be clear because there are Jews who do believe in Jesus. And, the scripture tells us one day they will all believe.

Hindus say the teenage Jesus traveled across Southeast Asia, learning yogic traditions and returning home to be a guru to the Jews. To Hindus, Jesus' proclamation, "The Father and I are one" confirmed the Hindu idea that everyone, through rigorous spiritual practice, can realize his own universal "god-consciousness."

Muslims believe Jesus was born without sin. The Quran references Jesus directly or indirectly over 180 times. He is called the Son of Mary, Spirit of God, and the Word of God. They believe he was a prophet with special powers like healing the blind and raising the dead. They also believe he spoke as an infant, formed birds out of clay and brought them to life by breathing into them. They don't believe he was God. They don't believe he died on a cross. Instead, they believe he was taken alive into heaven.

What about Buddhism? Who does **Buddhism** say Jesus is? Historically, Buddhism doesn't say much about Jesus other than he was a great man. The Dalai Lama has written a book about Jesus' teachings, and I hear it is interesting. But, there are vast differences between Buddhism and believing in Jesus. Buddhists see no need for a Savior because a person must save himself. Self-reliance trumps the need for a Messiah to save people from their sin.

What do **atheists** believe about Jesus? That's a good question, and there is an incredible mix of answers. I discovered an organization called Atheists for Jesus. Wow! Some atheists believe Jesus was a good, moral man. Others believe he never lived at all and all mention of him is complete fiction. I've got to say, that's the ultimate ignorance. Every now and then in my interactions with people, someone will say he or she is an atheist. I really don't argue with them, because ultimately I don't believe there are any real atheists.

Now Jesus asked the question first, "Who do people say that I am?" Then he asked a more direct question, "Who do YOU say that I am?" And Peter had an answer. "You are the Messiah." Peter got it. And, you know Peter and Jesus developed a close relationship. On the night of the crucifixion, Peter denied Jesus three times. He repented and was restored to fellowship with Jesus. And, then in the Book of

Acts, after Jesus had ascended into heaven, Peter was a completely dedicated apostle.

APPLICATION: Every believer here needs to have an answer to the question: “Who do YOU believe Jesus is?” And, the simple answer you need to know is this: “He is the Messiah.” The word *Messiah* means “anointed one”—deliverer and liberator of a group of people.

The question is: Who do you believe Jesus is? I mean really? Is he the Messiah, Savior, and Lord of your life? Have you committed your ways to him? Is he really Lord of your life, or do you see him as an insurance policy to keep you out of trouble—to keep you out of hell? Do you see him as a good luck charm?

If Jesus is your Messiah, your Savior, your Lord, do you live by his words? If you were to answer the question, “Who is Jesus to YOU?” with the word “Messiah,” would it have any meaning to you?

Second, JESUS MADE IT CLEAR WHAT HE MUST DO.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 8:31-33 ³¹ *He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.* ³² *He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.* 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 concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”*

EXPLANATION: Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah, and when Jesus told him what he, as Messiah, must do, Peter pulled Jesus aside to rebuke him. That’s an interesting statement—“he rebuked Jesus.” What did Peter say? My guess is Peter’s words were something like ignorance on fire. Peter’s faith was young and immature. He had correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah but did not understand his mission as Messiah.

Notice Peter rebuked Jesus privately, but Jesus rebuked Peter in front of the other disciples and called him Satan. When Peter called Jesus “Messiah” I am sure he was

proud because he answered correctly. But, then he got a dose of humility when Jesus called him Satan.

Third, JESUS MADE IT CLEAR WHAT HE EXPECTED FROM HIS FOLLOWERS.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 8:34-38 ³⁴ *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

EXPLANATION: There is no doubt Jesus’ words were strong here. Books have been written about this passage of scripture, and no doubt, it’s some of the most quoted of Jesus’ words. You’ve heard me say it before, and I’ll continue to say it because pop culture preaching says the opposite. The ultimate goal of God in your life is not to make you rich. It’s not to make you comfortable or famous. The ultimate goal of God in your life is not to make you healthy or to give you a long life. The ultimate goal of God in your life is to form you into the image of his Son, Jesus.

Now that Jesus had established he was the Messiah and had made it clear what he must go through, he made the characteristics of a disciple really clear.

Disciples must deny themselves. In other words, disciples must set aside their will for the will of God.

The Benson Commentary: “whosoever will come after me” — And be a disciple of mine, entitled to all the privileges and blessings which belong to my disciples in this world and the next; “let him deny himself” — His own will, in all things, great and small, however pleasing, and that continually; and take up his cross — Embrace the will of God, however painful, daily, hourly, continually.

ILLUSTRATION: Years ago, I heard a man say smoking cigarettes was his cross to bear. Nothing could be further from the truth. A bad habit is not a cross to bear. Embracing the will of God, whatever the cost, that is one's cross to bear. Maybe you are helping right now in a challenging situation that's costly and inconvenient, and you are doing it because you believe it is God's will. That would qualify as a cross to bear.

CONCLUSION: A disciple must be willing to lose himself for the sake of Christ. John 3:30 says, "*He must become greater. I must become less.*" The more a believer becomes absorbed into the person of Christ, the more Christ shines and the less the person stands out. This is a lifelong process, and it continues in all ages of people. At every stage in life, Jesus calls us to deeper discipleship.

Let me say: I am on this journey with you. I cannot say I've become all that God wants me to be. I cannot say I have completely lost myself for the sake of Christ. I've given up things for Christ, and I continue to do so.

Jesus bore the cross.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 12:2 ²*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at right hand of the throne of God.*

CALL TO ACTION: If Jesus can bear the cross of Calvary, we can bear the cross God gives us. It's not a literal cross. It's just a figurative statement. Are you bearing a cross today?

How God challenges our faith is different for each individual. I would caution anyone to be careful not to criticize someone for what appears to be a lack of faith. We really don't know what's going on in other peoples' lives.

In Philippians 1:6, the Apostle Paul wrote, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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