

Focusing Our Minds 3-8-09

Scripture Text: Mark 8:27-38

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."

As we continue on our Lenten journey this morning our hope is that through everything going on in life we are able to focus on the journey and on Jesus Christ. We look towards Easter and wish that it would be here already. We are eager for a celebration yet we do not want to go through the process of getting to the celebration. Lent means

that we contemplate our own lives, that we look inwardly. This may be uncomfortable for us. However uncomfortable it may be, we must journey on together.

Let's look a little bit at this scripture lesson that we have heard today. There is a lot happening here with Peter telling Jesus he thinks he is the Christ, to Jesus telling the disciples that he will die, to Jesus scolding Peter for his words of rebuke.

The question posed to the disciples by Jesus is a unique one. Who do you say that I am? That is a question we must wrestle with during our journey toward Easter. I will ask you the same, who is Jesus? When you looked at the picture and focused to see what was going on there, what thoughts ran through your mind when you realized it was Jesus? Were they thoughts of when you were younger and sang Jesus loves the little children? Were they thoughts of miracles performed by Jesus? Were they thoughts of Easter and Easter memories?

Peter came up with the Christ.

Then when Jesus began to talk about death Peter got upset and made it known to Jesus that he did not like talking about these things. Jesus scolded Peter and used a very interesting line, “For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” How easy it is to set our minds on human things. After all we are indeed human. Everything we know is mostly human. We know people, and actions, and words, life, and they are all human. So what then are these divine things that Jesus refers?

It is possible that Jesus is referring to a great divine plan and that Peter is just not able to see this great divine thing. You see there are just some things that go beyond our capabilities as humans. It is no doubt that Peter was focus on human things because that was his life. That is our life. During this Lent season I am looking for something divine that is possible for humans to understand and even take part in.

I searched around a little bit and found these verses in Galatians.

Galatians 5:22-23

²²By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

These are things that we can understand as humans and even take part in, yet they are things that are divine. Each of these are acceptable words that describe the character of God. Most of us have probably used these words when describing who we think God is.

I believe that humans can live out the fruit of the spirit and I believe that if we Christians lived them out in the same way we hold them up as an ideal, we would actually help change the world. I know many of you think that I am being completely idealistic when I say that but let me show you a couple of examples of this.

You see, it is interesting that I am preaching this weekend because yesterday was the one year anniversary of my grandfather passing

away. I have been thinking about him a lot during the past couple of weeks. The thing I remember most about my grandpa is that he was the very definition of kindness and gentleness. He was a quiet observer who rarely raised his voice except when his hearing started to go. He started talking louder and the volume of the tv went up as well. He was a man who lived out the fruit of the spirit and helped to shape and mold the lives of his children and grandchildren. In that way he was focused on divine things and changed the world.

He is not the only one, however. Today is the ninth anniversary of the day my grandma passed away. She was love, and joy, and faithfulness. She came from a family that did not want anything to do with religion but she made a decision early on to go to church. She would get herself up on Sunday and walk by herself to the church. This was as a small child of 7 or 8 years old. She saw something in the divine that she felt could actually make a difference in the lives of human beings. She used her gifts of the spirit to teach and to love her family. She made a huge difference in my life as well as my friends growing up. She made a difference because she was focused on divine things and not on human things.

As we continue on our Lenten journey, may each one of us focus our minds on what is to come. May we focus on our lives and how we relate to God, the divine.