

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been asked a thought-provoking question, like one of these?

- What is one goal you have in life?
- What do you want to do when you grow up?
- What would your ideal retirement look like?

Today we are looking at a thought-provoking question Jesus asked his disciples. Jesus often uses the Socratic/questioning method to teach his followers. He was the master of pivoting a discussion toward crucial life-teaching points, and away from doubt or frivolity, via pointed questions. Today's reading from Mark's Gospel gives us a prime example, one that we can take to heart, too.

TODAY'S READING

In your Bible, read Mark 8:27-30. Try to imagine that you're one of the twelve disciples as you read this story. While reading, note anything that strikes you as unusual, or particularly interesting.

This passage, short as it may be, is a critical turning point, in many ways. The disciples had been with Jesus for some time now, but now this was the time when they had to make a decision. So far, the disciples had simply followed Jesus, heard his words, watched his actions, and grown in their faith. Now it was time to make a decision regarding his person – to proclaim who he really was.

Read again verse 27, and think about Jesus looking you in the eye, asking you that question.

Did Jesus know the answer already? So why do you think Jesus asked this question?

Who would you say Jesus is? That question might seem really easy for some to answer. While others may be struggling to answer this question.

The people who encountered Jesus back then were unsure who he really was. Many of them did, however, know he was a blessing and that he did amazing works. But they didn't necessarily know where his power and authority came from. What's your answer?

The priests and religious leaders had questions about Jesus, too. Their conclusion, though, was that Jesus was not a blessing, but instead a curse who was turning the people away from their understanding of God.

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We often criticize the religious leaders of Jesus' day, because they ended up rejecting Jesus. We assume that their hearts were evil. But, if you were in their position, having studied the Word and the person of God, and then this man Jesus came claiming he was God, how would you react? Knowing that Satan has great power, could Jesus have been the work of Satan? The Pharisees surely thought so.

Jesus knew that his question to the disciples in verse 27 was hard to answer, for things were not fully made clear. Read verse 28 again.

Think about these different answers, shared by the disciples. John the Baptist, Elijah, and the prophets were all gifts from God. They all taught and lead the people to God, just as Jesus was doing. What set Jesus apart from these men, though? How is he different?

Now read verse 29 again. Why do you imagine that he applied his question to the disciples directly, on a personal level.

What's your first reaction to Peter's answer? "You are the Christ." This is a radical, ground-breaking, terrifying, risky thing to declare! No one at that time would dare be called "the Christ". That was blasphemy!

Read Exodus 20:2-4. The First Commandment (verse 3) forbids God's people from worshipping any god but the one true God.

In our story from Mark 8, Peter was declaring Jesus as God! This is the first record of someone calling Jesus "the Christ", and Peter just blurted it out. If Peter was wrong, he would have broken the First Commandment. If anyone heard his answer, he could be punished even unto death for what he just said. His answer was a risky and terrifying thing to say.

Imagine you were Peter, on that very day. Would you risk your life to give his ground-breaking answer? Why?

For those of us who are familiar with the rest of the story of Jesus' earthly life, we know that Peter was telling the truth. For Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (read John 14:1-6).

We confess that Jesus is the Christ. We know he came to earth to deal with the temptations and sins of mankind. He came with a mission, and fulfilled this mission by dying on the cross.

Do you think Jesus had this mission in mind when he instructed the disciples to tell no one about him (verse 30)? It was not time yet for him to be understood as Christ to everyone, as his earthly ministry was not yet over. For his timing was different.

What is the difference between our timing, and God's timing? Can you think of an example when God's timing seemed drastically different than your own?

How can you become more aware of Christ, his presence, his will, and timing?

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PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I/we declare you as Christ. Thank you for bringing me/us into your kingdom. Please give me/us strength for the day, as I/we go about my/our daily tasks. Help me/us become more aware of your blessings around me/us. Help me/us follow your will and timing. Lord, help me/us be directed to blurt out your name and teach others about you to those around me/us. In your holy name. Amen.