



The Sermon

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Mark 8:27-33

"The Crux of the Matter"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, today I have a special message, as you might imagine on the resurrection. We're going to step out of the book of Colossians for just this one Sunday and we're going to be in the gospel of Mark. So if you have your Bible, turn with me to the gospel of Mark. It's right after Matthew, right before Luke. Mark chapter 8. And today we're going to be looking at verses 27 to 33. And I'm going to begin by reading the passage, Mark chapter 8, beginning in verse 27.

You know, I have noticed the difference between the first service and the second service. They always laugh at the first service, okay; and at the second service, I'll say something like, "It's right after Matthew," and you just write that down in your moleskin. But at the first service they get that it's a joke. So I realize you can't laugh if you don't get it; so, it's kind of basic.

Okay, we're in Mark chapter 8 and verses 27 to 33. The title of this message is "The Crux of the Matter," or it could be "The Heart of Christianity." I want to begin reading in verse 27: "Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying, 'Who do people say that I am?' They told Him, saying, 'John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.' And He continued by questioning them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.' And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" This is the reading of God's Word, and we will spend our time today looking more carefully in what this says. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for the record of this incident that happened two thousand years ago, that we can now be, as it were, air-dropped into this very scene and hear what was said and observed, what took place, as though we were there ourselves. And I pray that this passage would perform its work in our hearts and in our lives this day. Let us not be merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. May this passage and these truths sink deeply into our heart and soul. This is our prayer, in Jesus' name. Amen.
[End]

In these verses that I have just read the two major defining issues of Christianity are put in front of us: "Who is Jesus?" and "Why did He come?" That's the crux of the matter. That's the acid test. That's the whole forest in one little nutshell: "Who is Jesus?" and "Why did He come?" This is the very heart and heartbeat of Christianity, it's what separates Christianity from every other religion in the world. It's what separates Christianity from every other false cult in the world. It's what separates true Christianity from liberal apostate Christianity and its social gospel.

"Who is Jesus?" and "Why did He come?" That is the continental divide in the world today. In this passage Jesus puts His disciples to the test to make certain that they understand both of these aspects: "Who is He?" and "Why has He come?" And they will pass the first question, and they will fail the

second question; and we will take some more time for the second part, the second question to be rooted and grounded more deeply in them.

And I want to make sure that each of us pass this exam today, because at stake is our eternal destiny. At stake is the forgiveness of all of our sins. At stake is being covered with the perfect righteousness of Christ. At stake is finding full and perfect acceptance with God. So this is not a peripheral matter that we are considering today, this is a primary matter. This is not a secondary matter, this is the supreme matter in all of the world: "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "Why has He come?" That is what is being addressed in this passage.

So, I want to walk through this with you; and there are three main headings that I will set before you to help be mile markers as we proceed through the passage. And the first thing that I want you to note is "who Jesus is," - that's in verses 27 to 29 - "who Jesus is." This is the great issue of the ages. And in verse 27 we read, "Jesus went out." Now, we're just stepping into the gospel of Mark, and I've not had the advantage of teaching verse by verse through this book leading up to this point, and so we just find ourselves abruptly, "Jesus went out."

Here's what you need to know: He has been in Bethsaida, which is north of the Sea of Galilee. It was in the northern part of the Promised Land around the Sea of Galilee that Jesus was most widely received. In fact, they wanted to make Him king in John chapter 6. It is down in Jerusalem where the religious establishment is, that He will be crucified, and where He had His great pushback. That's where the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees are. But as long as He is up north, He is widely received.

And so, "He went out from Bethsaida, along with His disciples," - all twelve were constantly at His side - "to the villages of Caesarea Philippi." So this will be a journey of about 25 miles. Caesarea Philippi marks the northernmost point that Jesus ever traveled in His life. It is at the upper reaches of the Promised Land; and the elevation change is dramatic in the Promised Land.

And as Jesus now leads the twelve up to Caesarea Philippi, Mount Hermon, if this is at the base of Mount Hermon, Mount Hermon rises to a height of 9,000 feet. It's staggeringly high, snow-capped even during the summer. And as they come to Caesarea Philippi, it is a city comprised of several little, small villages; and it was in ancient times the hub of idolatry. It's where Baal worship was first instituted into the Promised Land, where an altar to Baal was first erected. And there still is some of the after effects of the Baal worship. And so there were many different pagan gods that were in Caesarea Philippi.

And so, "on the way," - as if to prepare them for their arrival to Caesarea Philippi - "on the way, He questioned His disciples." And so this is like an examination, an informal examination, a pop quiz, to see how they have been processing His teaching.

"And so he said to them, 'Who do people say that I am?'" "People" here refer to the masses, to the multitudes, to the populace. "And who do they say that I am?" This really cuts to the heart of the issue. And everyone must answer this question: "Who is Jesus Christ?"

And so, "They told Him, saying," - and so here's, first, this is what the majority of the people are saying - "John the Baptist." Now John the Baptist has already been beheaded, and it was believed that Jesus was the reincarnation of John the Baptist, because Jesus was performing so many miracles, and the supernatural power of God attended the public ministry of Jesus, that this was inexplicable to the common person; and so their rationale was, "This must be John the Baptist raised from the dead."

Just two chapters earlier in Mark 6:14 we read, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that this is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." This is what the people were saying, "that John the Baptist must have been raised from the dead by the supernatural power of God, and that is the explanation for the miracles He's performing, so much so that even Herod

himself believed this." And in Mark 6:16 we read, "Herod kept saying, 'John, whom I beheaded, has risen!'" And so this was the talk of the town.

And we can understand that there were similarities between Jesus and John the Baptist. I mean, they both preached the same message, did they not: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They were both straight-talking, straight-shooting evangelists. They were both itinerant evangelists who were constantly on the move and preaching the gospel and preaching entrance into the kingdom of God; and they both had a very prophetic tone about their preaching. And so we can understand how some people could be so mistaken as to assume, "This must be John the Baptist," in their religious superstitions, trying to connect the dots on, "Who is this one from Nazareth?"

In verse 28, "and others say Elijah." They actually thought Jesus was the second coming of Elijah. And the second to last verse of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:5, says that Elijah will come and before the last days. And so there were countless numbers of people who assumed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the second to last verse of the Old Testament, that He is now Elijah who has come to preach.

And there were similarities between Elijah and the Lord Jesus. Elijah, remember, was that prophet who took on the prophets of Baal, and built an altar and doused it with water, and said, "Let the true God of heaven bring fire down upon this sacrifice and consume it," and God brought fire down. And Elijah had this fiery ministry; remember, he went to heaven in a chariot of fire. And the Lord Jesus had the fiery message as well that He brought. And so many people thought, "Well, He's the second coming of Elijah."

And then we read at the end of verse 28, "others, one of the prophets," countless other Old Testament prophets that they assumed Jesus would have been. And this tells us something about the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was very manly. It was very direct. It was not a seeker-sensitive approach to preaching like we hear today. I mean, Jesus wasn't sitting on a stool and gabbing. He wasn't walking around trying to entertain the people.

He was mistaken for John the Baptist, for heaven's sake, Elijah, "one of the other prophets." And so there were no lack of opinions concerning who Jesus is.

And it's the same today. There's no lack of opinions of who Jesus is. We can get in our car and drive in the immediate vicinity and we could go into any number of churches and come up with almost any kind of an answer we would like to have brought up. I mean, some would say that Jesus, "Oh, He was a great teacher, a great teacher of ethics. He was a great model of humanity and a model of morality." And others would say, "Oh, He was a great leader of men." I mean, that is still being perpetuated today.

And every cult and every false religion acknowledge that Jesus lived. They acknowledge that Jesus was a great individual who spoke great words. But quite frankly, this is not good enough, because Jesus was more than a carpenter. Jesus was more than a mere prophet, though He was the greatest Prophet who ever walked the earth; but He was more than that. And so Jesus must press a little deeper, and He comes now with a follow-up question, a second question. And so many times it's the second question that is the knockout punch.

And so, verse 29, He follows this question with a second question in verse 29, "And He continued by questioning them," - as they continued to walk along, Jesus had one more question - 'But who do you say that I am?'" The emphasis is upon "you." This is a very personal and probing and penetrating question.

"And Peter answered." And this is one of those times where Peter does not need an after-foot mint. All right, they got it at the first service; you're just a little slow in the second service. Can we have some more coffee brought in?

So, "Peter answered," - and really answering on behalf of the other disciples; he's the spokesman. And this time Peter, he knocks it out of the

park. Peter says the truth. He is a mouthpiece for the truth here - "and he says, 'You are the Christ,' - not a Christ - 'You are the Christ, the one and only Christ.'"

And what does "Christ" mean? It means, literally, the anointed One, the One who has been long promised throughout the entire Old Testament, who has now come in the power of the Holy Spirit and is endued with all of the omnipotence of heaven to carry out His ministry. He is the one that the entire Old Testament has looked ahead to: the Christ, the Messiah, the Moshia. He is the one who is prophesied in the Old Testament and promised in the Old Testament, and types and figures. The entire Old Testament is one big finger pointing into the future that He is coming, the Messiah.

And so Peter says, "You are the Christ." And Peter is exactly right; He is the Christ. And in Matthew's gospel of the parallel account, Matthew adds these further words from the mouth of Peter: "and You are the Son of the living God. You are God in human flesh. You are the eternal Son of the living God. You are co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. You are one in essence and one in attributes and one in being with the Father."

This is the great confession that Peter makes. It is the great confession that each and every one of us here must make today in order to have a true faith in Jesus Christ. Our faith is no greater than the object of our faith; and He must be the object of our faith. Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of Man. He is Immanuel, God with us. He is fully God, fully man; truly God, truly man. He is the living Word who was with the Father from all eternity past to become the incarnate Word. He is the great I AM. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the only Deliverer from our sins. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the Savior of the world. He is the way and the truth and the life. He is the final Judge. He is the only Redeemer and Deliverer of His people.

Now, how did Peter know this? How do you and I know this? Well, the only way to know this truth is twofold. There must be an external witness, and

there has to be an internal witness. There has to be divine revelation that is known with the mind, and there has to be divine illumination in the heart. And in Matthew's gospel, Matthew records Jesus' response to what Peter has said.

In Matthew 16:17, "Jesus said to him," - to Peter - 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona,' - Barjona means son of Jonah; that was his father - 'because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. Flesh and blood taught you, but flesh and blood did not reveal this to you.'" You can pick up a Bible and read it, and you can see who Jesus is, but it may not be revealed to you who Jesus is. You may know it in your head, but not know it in your heart.

So, Jesus continues. He says, "because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." You see, it's not enough just to intellectually know the facts about who Jesus is, there must be the inner working of the Holy Spirit down in the heart to open your eyes to see who Jesus is, to open your ears to hear the truth that is being brought to you, to open your heart that you would believe this truth. And Peter is one who has been taught not just by flesh and blood, but by God the Father who is in heaven. If you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, it is because, one, there has been the external witness of the truth, as you have either read your Bible, heard a preacher, attended a small group Bible study, and you have had the truth of the gospel presented to you.

But why does one person believe and another does not believe? Why did Peter get it but Judas did not get it? Because God the Father must reveal it to your inner person and substantiate the truth that is being presented to you. And if you are a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, you've come to know the truth, but the truth has been revealed to your heart that this is the veracity, this is the very truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so, Jesus acknowledges this to Peter: "This is why you believe."

And so today if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, this should be such a humbling thing. It's not just because you were smarter than someone else.

It's not just because you had a higher IQ. It's not just because you're a better reader than someone else or had access to more information; all of that is important. But what really gets to the crux of the matter is that God the Father by His Spirit has revealed this to you. I mean, you could have an open Bible just like this and we cut out all the lights and we're just sitting in a dark room; it would mean nothing to you. The lights have to be turned on and for you to be able to see what you're reading, and for the lights to come on inside of you. And that is what Jesus is saying to Peter: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." So, God has done a business in your heart and in your soul for you to be a believer here today, a work that He has not done in others.

We come to verse 30, the second thing that I want you to see is "why Jesus came." We have seen who Jesus is. He's the Christ. He's the son of the living God. But pressing even deeper to the heart of Christianity is "why Jesus came." And so in verse 30 we see, "And He warned them" - he admonished them - "to tell no one about Him."

Now what a strange thing to say. I mean, can you imagine a team, an evangelistic team from our church, and we gather together, you've been trained in the gospel, and we go out to White Rock Lake, and I go, "One final word. Don't talk to anybody. Don't tell anybody about the gospel." You go, "What? That's strange." Well, it seems rather strange here, until we understand what's going on why Jesus warned them not to tell anyone.

Because in Israel, which was in unbelief, which was an apostate nation, they were looking for a political deliverer in the Messiah, that when Jesus, when the Messiah would come, that this Messiah would come galloping into town on a white horse and he would break the yoke of Roman oppression, and He would run Rome out of the Promised Land and He would set up His kingdom in the Promised Land, and He would begin to rule and reign, and the nations would come to the temple and the nations would worship Him. That's what they were looking for - a political leader, a political Messiah, a political deliverer to get Rome off their back. They were not looking for a redemption, they were looking for a revolution to sever their relationship with Rome.

And so Jesus understood this. Jesus did not come to establish Israel to be a free state, Jesus came to establish perishing souls to be set free. And He is now two-and-a-half years into His public ministry; and at this point, He is setting His face like a flint towards Jerusalem; and He will not be deterred, and He will go into Jerusalem, and there He will offer Himself up, a sacrifice for many; and he does not want the crowds to try to now be opposing Him from such a death and trying to make Him their king. No, He has come for the salvation of many. And so He warns them not to tell anyone in the north about His true identity.

In verse 31, "He began to teach them," and this now marks a new stage in His public ministry. To this point, Jesus has only spoken about His resurrection in veiled terms. That went over the heads of the disciples. He said in John chapter 2, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They never got; it never computed; it never connected. They never realized what He was saying, because it was intentionally vague.

In Matthew chapter 12, Jesus said, "Just as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days in the earth." What? What does that mean? It is now for the first time Jesus will speak plain as day what lies ahead, that He will be going to Jerusalem, and as we see here, He will suffer many things. That's not even been on their radar that He will be rejected by the religious establishment, that He will be killed. "What? We have left our boats and our nets and our tax booths to come follow You. We've invested everything in our life to come follow You. And now You're telling us You are going to be killed?" And by that point, they are numb.

And then He adds, "and rise again on the third day." They've already tuned out by that point. So this is a decisive moment that He will repeat again and again. "He began to teach them," meaning it's not just a one-time lesson, He will teach them this again and again and again and again. And I want to show you here in Mark's gospel very quickly. Look at the next chapter, Mark 9:9, "And they were coming down from the mountain," - the mount of transfiguration - "and He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what

they had seen," – which was His divine glory that was shining brighter than ten thousand suns in the sky above on the mount of transfiguration. "Don't tell anyone what you've seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead."

And then look at verse 12: "And He said to them, 'Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?'" That's a third time Jesus stresses this. And look at verse 31: "For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.'"

And if that were not enough, look at the next chapter in Mark chapter 10, and beginning in verse 33. With rapid fire succession and in staccato-like fashion, Jesus is driving this nail into the board of their minds again and again and again what He has not really spoken clearly to them before. So in verse 33, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests in the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles." Verse 34, "They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

This is the first time Jesus is turning all the cards over. He has been discipling them and training them for over two years of , "What is the kingdom of God? How do you enter the kingdom of God? What is the kingdom of light? What is the kingdom like?" But now for the first time He is telling them that He will be put to death, and that He will rise again from the grave. But after He says He will be put to death, it's as if they don't hear anything past that, that that will not be the end of the story.

And so here in chapter 8, verse 31, "And He began to teach them" – and I want you to see the irony of this; this is another reason why they had so trouble connecting the dots on this – "that the Son of Man must suffer many things." How strange that is.

This title "the Son of Man" is used in a two-fold way in the Scripture. It was Jesus' favorite way to refer to Himself to mankind. More than any other title, more than any other name, He chose to identify Himself not as the Son of God - which He was - but the Son of Man, so that He would identify Himself with those whom He came to save. As He came all the way down from the palaces of glory down into the sewer of this world in order to rescue us who were perishing, He loved to identify Himself as the Son of Man, because He stepped into the human race and became one of us, yet without sin, in order to deliver us. That's the beauty of the title "the Son of Man."

But there's a second meaning of this word that's very important and it's drawn from the Old Testament, and I'm going to ask you to turn back because I want to read these verses. It's in the prophet Daniel, Daniel chapter 7, because this title "Son of Man" also refers to His sovereignty, to His supremacy. And as you recall, Daniel was given visions in the night.

And in Daniel 7:9, I want you to see this: "I kept looking until thrones" - plural - "were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat," - that's God the Father - "His vesture was like white snow" - shining in His holiness and in His glory - "and the hair of His head like white wool." - perfect wisdom and genius insight - "His throne was ablaze with flames," - full of fiery righteousness - "it's wheels like were a burning fire."

Verse 10, "A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads" - which means ten thousand - "myriads upon myriads" - that's ten thousands plural times ten thousands plural - "were standing before Him. The court sat," - it's a great day of judgment - "and the books were opened."

Verse 13, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven" - on a glory cloud - "One like a Son of Man was coming," - approaching the throne of the Father - "and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him" - to the Son of Man -

"was given dominion," - that's sovereignty - "glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men from every language might serve Him." - the Son of Man - "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away," - He'll never be impeached, He'll never step down from office, He will never be removed from His throne - "and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed." It will be a kingdom that will destroy every other kingdom. This is the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a title not only of His lowly humility and humanity to identify with us, but also a title of unrivaled supremacy as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now come back to Mark 8. And what is stretching the mind of the disciples beyond their capacity to take this in is that the Son of Man who will establish His kingdom on the earth, the Son of Man who will approach the Ancient of Days and be given dominion over all creation must suffer, "He must suffer," - notice - "must suffer many things." What a juxtaposition. What an oxymoron. The word "must" - it's a Greek word - *dei*: it means divine necessity, that this suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ was foreordained and predetermined and predestined by God the Father from before the foundation of the world; that long before Adam ever sinned, long before the human race had ever come crashing down in the fall, God already had the plan in place to send the Son of Man to suffer many things. He must. It's immutable; it's irrevocable; it's unalterable. The Son of Man must suffer. He must be inflicted with great harm and suffer disgrace.

And Jesus adds, "many things," and it speaks to the enormity and the intensity of the sufferings, plural, that Jesus will endure during His earthly life, that He will be rejected by men. There will be attempts to take His life long before His life would ever be taken. There will be suffering upon suffering. The Son of Man, the sovereign One will suffer many things and be rejected. He will be opposed and rejected because He does not meet their standards. They're looking for a political Messiah. They're looking for someone to come stampeding into town on a white horse, not a lowly donkey. They're looking for a gallant charismatic-type figure. And He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and He will be rejected by the entire leadership of the nation.

Notice in verse 31, "by the elders," that's the members of the Sanhedrin. There were 70 men who ruled the nation. It was like combining the executive branch with the judiciary branch, and they just ran the affairs of the nation of Israel. "And the elders rejected Him."

And then we read, "the chief priests" – they presided over the religious part of the nation: Caiaphas and Annas – "and the scribes." The scribes were the professional lawyers of the day. They were the interpreters of the Mosaic Law. They were the guardians of the Rabbinic tradition. And top to bottom, the entire leadership of the nation utterly rejected Him: the sovereign, supreme Son of Man, the suffering Son of Man, rejected.

And then Jesus pulls the veil back a little bit further to allow them to see the future what will take place over these next months, "and be killed." This word "killed" means to suffer a violent, horrific death, like an animal being slaughtered in order to be sacrificed on an altar. It's in the passive voice which means He will be killed by the nation, as they will cry out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and they will put Him to death. And Isaiah chapter 53 uses these words to describe this death, that "He will be pierced through and scourged, and oppressed and slaughtered, and cut off and crushed by the Father Himself." And at this point, no doubt, the disciples cannot hear another word. The One that they have given up everything – business and family and future – to come follow Him who will be put to death.

And Jesus says this at the end, "and after three days rise again." What's interesting is "be killed" is in the passive voice; it will be done to Him. But "rise again" is in the active voice, which means He will be the one who will raise Himself from the dead. How about that? John 10:18, "I have authority to lay My life down, I have authority to raise it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." He is the resurrection and the life, and He would raise Himself from the dead.

This word "rise" means to get up and to stand up, even to jump up is how it's used in the Gospels. And Jesus on that Sunday morning, He got up and stood up, even jumped up, and came walking out of that tomb a risen,

living, victorious Savior. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead will be the ultimate validation that every claim that He made about Himself is absolutely true. He backed it up with His own resurrection. It was a validation that what He accomplished upon the cross was a perfectly sufficient atonement that was accepted by the Father, and it is validated by His resurrection; that every doctrine that He taught, every truth that He taught, He validated it with His own resurrection. That's why the resurrection is so important. And it is by His resurrection that He defeated the greatest enemy this world has ever seen, the devil himself. In John 12:31, "Now the ruler of this world will be cast out." And John 16 11, "The ruler of this world has been judged."

And so this is a high water mark in redemptive history, as Jesus is two-and-a-half years into His public ministry. And right around the corner is Golgotha and Calvary and Jerusalem, and all the suffering and all the rejection that He faces. He is preparing His disciples so that when this takes place, they will understand.

But, of course, we know they did not understand, they didn't get it. The only one who got it was the apostle John, who followed Jesus all the way to the cross. But when the Shepherd was struck, the sheep were scattered, and they went and hid behind closed doors in every different direction. They were not listening to what Jesus said so clearly. And I think it begs the question, "Are we listening? Are we paying attention to what God says in His Word?" and, "Are we following it, or is it just going over our heads?"

This leads, finally, in verse 32, to "who Jesus provoked." You would have thought after Jesus made this announcement that He would rise again from the dead that they would almost put Him on their shoulders and carry Him off like, "We've just won the football game," that you would think they would be singing the hallelujah chorus.

But look at verse 32; it didn't go down that way. "And He was stating" – and the verb tense there indicates He was stating it again and again and again, over and over and over – "the matter plainly" – the matter of His

resurrection, the matter of His death. And the word "plainly" indicates that He was speaking to them no longer in cloudy veiled terms, but openly, clearly, without ambiguity. The problem would not be with Jesus, the problem would be with them. It would not be with His teaching, it would be with their hearing. And so He was stating it again and again and again, plain as day.

And what we read next is shocking, it's just utterly shocking: "And Peter took Him aside." He took Him aside in order to have a private conversation with Jesus in order to straighten this matter out. "This is not how things are going to work out. This is not a good plan." And Peter has gone from this great confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," to just seconds later the worst statement to ever come out of any believer's mouth in any century of church history.

Matthew records him saying, "May it not be." And here it says, "He began to rebuke Him." Peter actually began to rebuke Jesus: "No, that's not the way this is going to go. You're not going to be killed; we're not going to stand for it. That's a horrible plan. Who came up with this plan? I've got all the votes among the twelve of us; this is not going to go through, never." This whole idea was abhorrent that Jesus would be killed. And if you and I were standing there that day, and we had left our business and left our house and left our families, we probably would have been in the same state of being deer in the headlight.

And so, verse 33, "But turning around and seeing His disciples," so Peter has literally pulled Jesus aside in order to straighten Jesus out, separate Him so this won't be embarrassing for Jesus in front of the disciples, "in front of Your men." It's kind of so Jesus can save face on this. And so he's pulled Jesus aside and has rebuked Him to His face. And so Jesus now turns around so that He can address all twelve of the disciples in what He has to say to Peter, because they're all in on this, okay. Peter is the one who's always doing the talking, but they're all in on this with him.

And so, "Turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter," – Jesus rebuked Peter's rebuke – "and said, 'Get behind Me, Satan. You are a mouthpiece for hell.'" What a devastating thing to hear your Master say to you: "You're a spokesman for the devil. You are a stumbling block to Me, because you are putting in front of Me a temptation that I would not go to the cross, that I would not lay down My life, a sacrifice for many, that I would not be raised from the dead. No, this is God's eternal purpose and plan. The devil is using you, Peter, to try to move Me in a different direction; and it will not happen."

And He gives the explanation now at the end of verse 33, "for you are not setting your mind on God's interests." What's God's interests? The salvation of souls that are perishing in sin that are on a collision course with judgment, to rescue them. That's God's interests. "But instead, you've set your mind on man's interests." What's that? Political stability, economic upturn, things that are fine. But that's not why Jesus came into the world. He didn't come to fix the economy. He didn't come to solve the political dilemma. He came to rescue perishing souls who had no hope of heaven, and to redeem them from the slave market of sin by paying the price of His own gold and silver, as He shed His blood upon the cross, in order to buy us, that we would be His possession, and to transfer us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light; to deliver us from this evil world system and transfer us into the kingdom of God; to make us sons of God and daughters of God that necessitates the sin-bearing, substitutionary death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

And there is no other way of salvation. If there was any other way for anyone to be made right before Holy God in heaven, if there was another path, if there was a Plan B, God would have never sent His Son to die such an ignominious death upon the cross. But this was the only way. At this point, Peter doesn't get it. He will get it; and on the day of Pentecost he will preach what is arguably the greatest sermon ever to be preached during the church age, as three thousand souls will be converted, as Peter will stand up and say, "He was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God; but you nailed Him to a cross. But God has raised Him up again," Acts 2:24. And Peter will drive home the resurrection of Jesus Christ in that great sermon on the day of Pentecost.

This is the crux of the matter, everything else is secondary. This is what's most important for your faith and for your life. And so I must ask you, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ?" Your eternal destiny is at stake. Do you believe that He is the Son of the living God? Do you believe that He had to be rejected, that He had to suffer, that He had to be killed, that He had to be raised from the dead?"

Let me ask you this: Did He come for you? Did He suffer for you? Was He rejected for you? Was He killed for you? Did He raise Himself from the dead for you? That is the question; and saving faith says, "Amen, I believe that, I embrace that." And if you believe that with all your heart, it's not because this flesh and bones taught you this, it's because the Father in heaven has revealed this to your heart of hearts, and you know that you know that you know that this is true, because God has done an inside work in your heart and your soul. And there are not enough demons in or out of hell that could ever convince you otherwise, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

If you have never believed in Jesus Christ, I cannot think of a greater moment to believe in Jesus Christ than on Easter morning. And right where you sit in the privacy of your own heart, I call you to believe in Christ. I invite you to believe in Jesus Christ, I appeal to you and urge you to leave the darkness and enter into the light, and you will find a Savior who will receive you into His open arms, and wash you with His blood and present you faultless before the Father in heaven. If you've never done that, today is the day. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, how we thank You for sending Your Son into this horrible world for wretches like we are, to redeem us and to save us. May the truths that we have looked at today, may they ring loud and clear in our heart, and not just because flesh and blood has revealed it, but because You in heaven have revealed it. Make this true in, Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

Would you stand for the closing benediction? It comes from the book of Ephesians. I send you out with this: "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." God bless you. Happy Easter.