

# MARK

## Chapter 8

### *Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand*

**In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, 2 “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” 4 And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” 5 And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” 6 And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. 7 And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. 8 And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. 10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.**

**6:14-8:30** The new section introduced by Ch 6:14 and extending to Ch 8:30 focuses upon a period during which Jesus was frequently in retirement beyond the borders of Galilee. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod’s suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead (Ch 6:14-16) introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist (Ch 6:17-29). At the return of the Twelve Jesus withdraws to a solitary place, pursued by multitude. In compassion He provides bread in the wilderness, and five thousand are fed (Ch 6:35-44). A second feeding of four thousand is reported in the region of the Decapolis (Ch 8:1-10), and the striking recurrence of the word “bread” throughout this section provides the pervading motif (Chs. 6:52; 7:2, 28; 8:14 ff). The importance of the two feeding miracles is emphasized when the disciples’ own misunderstanding of Jesus are traced to their failure to understand the significance of the abundant provision of bread. While a single instance of the public teaching occurs in Ch 7:1-23, the accent falls on the instruction of the disciples, whose hardness of heart, unbelief and failure to understand is a prominent element in the record. A point of transition is provided by Ch 8:22-26 where the restoring of sight to a man who was blind signals the opening of the eyes of the disciples as well. A climax in Mark’s narrative is achieved in Ch 8:27-29 when Jesus and His company approach Caesarea Philippi where Jesus’ dignity as Messiah is acknowledged for the first time. (Lane)

**8:1** *again a great crowd gathered.* Since this incident took place in the region of the Decapolis (see 7:31), the crowd probably was made up of both Jews and Gentiles. (CSB)

**8:2** *I have compassion on the crowd.* As Jesus had compassion because the people were like sheep without a shepherd (6:34), he now has compassion because they had been so long without food. (CSB)

σπλαγχνίζομαι, “I have deep, heartfelt compassion”: See 6:34, where Jesus had the same compassion because the (Jewish) people were like sheep without a shepherd. The Gentiles are not normally depicted with sheep imagery, so it is much less appropriate here than in Mark 6. But

Jesus does have the same “gut wrenching” concern for them as he does for “his own” people. (CC)

*with Me ... nothing to eat.* Crowds were wildly enthusiastic for Jesus (cf 1:37, 45; 3:9; 6:33, 54–55). They were so eager to stay with Him that they lost track of time and began to ignore basic necessities such as food. (TLSB)

**8:3** Jesus already had in mind to feed the hungry multitude; nonetheless, He invited the disciples to reflect on the problem (cf 6:37). Jesus tested them to see whether they would have faith. (TLSB)

**8:4** *how can one feed these people?* The disciples’ question reflects their inadequacy and acknowledges that Jesus alone could feed the people. They had not forgotten his feeding of the 5,000 (6:34–44) and were probably simply giving back to him the task of procuring bread. Alternatively, their question may reveal their spiritual dullness—they were slow learners. (CSB)

Once again, the disciples failed to recognize Jesus’ true identity and lacked faith in His power. (TLSB)

*desolate place – ἐπ’ ἐρημίας*, “in a solitary/wilderness place” (8:4): As with the Jews, so the Gentiles are fed in the wilderness with bounty (see 6:33–44, especially “the place is deserted [ἐρημος]” in 6:35). (TLSB)

**8:5–6** *Seven.* May represent the number of Gentile nations surrounding Israel. There were 12 baskets of leftovers collected in 6:43, a number representing Israel. (CC)

**8:7** In contrast with 6:41, Jesus blessed the fish separately, after the bread had been distributed, thus making a second course that highlighted the bounty of the meal. (TLSB)

*small fish.* Probably roasted until crisp. (TLSB)

**8:10** *Dalmanutha.* South of the Plain of Gennesaret a cave has been found bearing the name “Talmanutha,” perhaps the spot where Jesus landed. Matthew says Jesus went to the vicinity of Magadan. Dalmanutha and Magadan (or Magdala), located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, may be names for the same place or for two places located close to each other. (CSB)

Only NT mention. It was most likely on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**8:1–10** Jesus’ compassion moves Him to feed another hungry crowd by means of a second miraculous multiplication of bread. When Jesus confronts the disciples with feeding the crowds for a second time, they again fail to see that His power provides the way forward. How slowly we sometimes respond in faith! Yet how graciously Jesus continues to provide, both with His Word of forgiveness and with daily bread. He fully satisfies our bodies and souls. • Lord, deepen our hunger for Your Word, and so teach us to turn first to You in every need. Then feed us with Your multiple gifts. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Pharisees Demand a Sign*

**11** The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. **12** And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this

**generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” 13 And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.**

**8:11 Pharisees.** The Pharisees had already decided that Jesus must die (3:6). Thus, their behavior here is pure hypocrisy. (TLSB)

*sign from heaven.* The Pharisees wanted more compelling proof of Jesus’ divine authority than his miracles, but he refused to perform such a sign because the request came from unbelief. (CSB)

**8:12 sighed deeply.** Display of emotion. (TLSB)

*no sign.* Jesus refused to provide a gratuitous show of power. The only sign given to such unbelief will be Jesus’ death and resurrection. (TLSB)

**8:13 the other side.** The eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. (CSB)

**8:11–13** Even though the Pharisees have already rejected Jesus, they still try to demand that He prove His identity. Scoffers continue to do as much today, denying God but at the same time hurling demands for proof toward Him. Believers, however, know that God is real, and they see the depth of His love in Christ’s suffering and the glory of His promises in the resurrection. • Lord, when we hunger for a sign of Your presence and power, focus our eyes on Your empty tomb. Make this the lasting, satisfying sign that opens our eyes to You. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod*

**14 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” 16 And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. 17 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” 20 “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” 21 And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”**

**6:14-8:30** The new section introduced by Ch 6:14 and extending to Ch 8:30 focuses upon a period during which Jesus was frequently in retirement beyond the borders of Galilee. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod’s suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead (Ch 6:14-16) introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist (Ch 6:17-29). At the return of the Twelve Jesus withdraws to a solitary place, pursued by multitude. In compassion He provides bread in the wilderness, and five thousand are fed (Ch 6:35-44). A second feeding of four thousand is reported in the region of the Decapolis (Ch 8:1-10), and the striking recurrence of the word “bread” throughout this section provides the pervading motif (Chs. 6:52; 7:2, 28; 8:14 ff). The importance of the two feeding miracles is emphasized when the disciples’ own misunderstanding of Jesus are traced to their failure to understand the significance of the abundant provision of bread. While a single instance of the public teaching occurs in Ch 7:1-23, the accent falls on the instruction of the disciples, whose hardness of heart, unbelief and failure to understand is a prominent element in the record. A point of transition is provided by Ch

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Jesus now goes back to Gentile lands (as in 5:1–20; 7:24–8:9). As in those earlier passages, once again the Gentiles are to be seen as equally full recipients of the gracious reign and rule of God. In their area will occur still clearer revelation of who Jesus is and what he is about, including both the first passion prediction (8:31) and the transfiguration (9:2–7). (TLSB)

**8:15** *yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod*. Here, as generally in the NT (Mt 16:6, 11; Lk 12:1; 1Co 5:6–8; Gal 5:9; but Mt 13:33 seems to be an exception), yeast is a symbol of evil or corruption. The metaphor includes the idea of a tiny amount of yeast being able to ferment a large amount of dough. In this context it refers to the evil disposition of both the Pharisees and Herod Antipas (see Lk 23:8), who called for Jesus to produce a sign, i.e., a proof of his divine authority. (CSB)

While the disciples' confusion is probably more natural than people have thought heretofore, their biggest error lies in not realizing that Jesus' focus is seldom exclusively on earthly things, and it certainly is not so here. (CC)

**8:16** *no bread*. Problem is not a shortage of food, but a lack of faith in the One who can provide for this and every need. (TLSB)

**8:17–21** Jesus warns against a failure to see His true identity and a lack of faith in Him as Lord. Significantly, His adversaries already know but reject His claims to be the Messiah. His disciples, on the other hand, are depicted as merely oblivious to His true identity. (TLSB)

**8:17** *Do you not yet perceive*. The Twelve had seen the clear testimony of Jesus' miraculous feedings—to say nothing of His many other miracles—yet did not grasp that Jesus is the Messiah. (TLSB)

**8:18–20** These verses imply two feeding narratives. (CSB)

**8:21** Repetition of this question (v 17) anticipates the great moment when the disciples recognize Jesus (v 29). (TLSB)

**8:14–21** The disciples remember their lack of bread but forget about the One who is with them, the very Lord and Creator of all. At times, we are similarly hard-hearted and shortsighted, focusing so much on our need for daily bread that we forget to call upon Jesus, the very bread of life. Nevertheless, Jesus patiently teaches His disciples, showing over and over that He alone can satisfy our deepest needs. • Lord, open the eyes of our hearts, so that we see You as the very bread from heaven, the answer to all our wants and needs. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Healing of a Blind Man at Bethsaida*

**22 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” 24 And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees,**

**walking.” 25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 And he sent him to his home, saying,**

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**8:22 Bethsaida.** Village on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. (TLSB)

**8:23 out of the village.** Jesus heals the man away from the crowds. Cf 5:40; 7:33. (TLSB)

The restoring of sight to a blind person among the mixed population of Bethsaida would have led to the type of false veneration that Jesus constantly avoided. (Lane)

*spit on his eyes.* Jesus used His saliva as a means of healing on other occasions. (TLSB)

The application of spittle to the eyes and the laying on of hands in healing have significant parallels in Jewish practice and in the Gospel (see on chapters 6:5; 7:33). By these actions Jesus entered into the thought-world of the man and established significant contact with him. (Lane)

**8:24 like trees walking around.** The man had no doubt bumped into trees in his blindness; now he dimly sees something like tree trunks moving about. (CSB)

The man sees unclearly at first. It may indicate that the man was not born blind but lost his sight. (He knows something is still wrong in what he now sees.). (TLSB)

**8:25 Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes.** This second laying on of hands is unique in Jesus’ healing ministry. *he saw everything clearly.* Giving sight to the blind was another indication that Jesus was doing what God had promised to do when he came to bring salvation (Isa 35:5). (CSB)

Only two-step miracle recorded in the Gospels. The blind man receives his sight slowly. In the same way, the disciples do not understand what they are seeing; Jesus must teach them who He is again and again (v 31; 9:31; 10:32–33). (TLSB)

**8:26 Don’t go into the village.** So as not to broadcast what Jesus had done for him and precipitate a crisis before Jesus had completed his ministry. (CSB)

**8:22–26** Jesus heals a blind man as His disciples continue to struggle with the issue of who Jesus is and what He has come to do. Sin blinds all of us. Yet, Jesus’ gracious touch opens our eyes so that, despite our weaknesses, we recognize Him as the Christ and believe in Him unto life everlasting. • Lord, open our eyes to see You and Your ways. Help us to recognize and confess You clearly as our great physician. Amen. (TLSB)

*Peter’s Confession of Christ*

**27 And 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 told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” 29 And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.**

**8:27-35** The Gospel readings for the last several weeks have presented a mini-series of continuing stories. Jesus has been involved in the lives of many people: individuals, small groups, and a crowd of 5,000. He has ministered in a variety of ways. The disciples have been witnesses, not just to short snapshots of Jesus—they had opportunity to piece the pictures together into a panoramic view of who Jesus was. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The *Gospel* (Mk 8:27–38), which features both Peter’s declaration about Jesus (vv 27–30) and Jesus’ foretelling of his death and resurrection (vv 31–38), occurs within a section of Mark’s Gospel referred to as “Withdrawals from Galilee” (*Concordia Self-Study Bible* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], 1500). Roughly the first third of Mark’s Gospel features Jesus’ Galilean ministry (1:14–6:29). At Mk 6:32, however, the evangelist records that Jesus and his band went away by themselves to a solitary place. Thereupon follow the feeding of the five thousand on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (6:30–52), a run-in with Pharisees at Gennesaret (7:1–23), the healing of the Syrophenician’s daughter at Tyre on the way to Sidon (7:24–31), an excursion through the Decapolis (7:31–8:10), and a final foray with the disciples to the region of Caesarea Philippi (8:11–9:32; cf. map in *CSSB*, p. 1516). Hence, it is in the environs of Caesarea Philippi—located at the foot of Mount Hermon, a capital city of the north founded by Philip the Tetrarch (D. F. Payne, “Caesarea Philippi,” in *The New Bible Dictionary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 175)—that Peter revealed the truth about Jesus (8:29b) and Jesus spoke “plainly” about his impending suffering, dying, and rising again after three days (8:31–32a). The sermon text falls in a section of Mark’s Gospel where Jesus virtually is on the run from Pharisees who confront him at several turns (cf. 7:1, 5; 8:11). Jesus will return to Galilee more briefly (9:33–50), engage in further ministry in Judea and Perea (10:1–52), and begin his Passion with the triumphal entry (11:1–11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**8:27-28** As Jesus and his disciples travel in northern Galilee, he takes a public opinion poll. What are the disciples hearing as they mingle with the crowds? Jesus obviously doesn’t need to find out what he already knows; he intends to help the disciples understand that people who experience miracles do not always understand and believe in the source of their aid. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The answers represent a variety of messianic expectations. Some thought God had validated John the Baptist’s ministry by raising him from the dead; these people misunderstood who had prepared for whom. Others thought Jesus fulfilled the promise of Elijah’s return, found in Mal 4:5. In the Jewish Passover tradition, an empty place was set at the table for Elijah, should he

return. Since he had been taken alive to heaven, was it not possible for him to return alive and continue his ministry? Still others saw in Jesus the culmination of the ministry and messianic hope of other prophets. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

People recognized Jesus as more than a teacher or clever speaker. They saw the power of God in him, but most had not understood his divinity. They were elated that God had sent a prophet, but had not caught on that God himself had established residency in their community. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**8:27** *went* – The little word *exēlthen* connects the sermon text to the previous story, the healing of a blind man at Bethsaida (Mk 8:22–26). From Bethsaida, Jesus and the Twelve moved north, following the course of the Upper Jordan to its source, literally, “to the villages of Philip’s Caesarea” (*eis tas kōmas Kaisareias tēs Philippou*). This Caesarea was in Philip’s jurisdiction (cf. Lk 3:1), to be distinguished from Caesarea Maritima (“Caesarea on-the-sea”), named after Augustus and headquarters for the Roman occupation (cf. Acts 8:40; 9:30; 10:1, 24; 11:11, among others). Philip’s Caesarea also was a thoroughly Romanized area, and it may be significant theologically that Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ occurred where locals were devoted to the idea of Caesar’s lordship (W. L. Lane, *Gospel according to Mark* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974], 289). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

*Caesarea Philippi*. Northernmost Galilean city Jesus visited, 25 miles north of Bethsaida, in the largely Gentile region of the Sea of Galilee. (TLSB)

**8:27b-28** Jesus asked his question “on the way” (*en tēi hodōi*), that is, in a setting where he could instruct the Twelve. The Galilean ministry was now practically ended, and the way to the cross lay before him. Now was the time to question the Twelve about what they had seen and heard (cf. Mk 7:37; 8:17–21) and prepare them for the future. Some felt that Jesus represented a raised John the Baptizer (Mk 6:14; Lk 9:7); others, that he was an Elijah redivivus (Mk 6:15a; Lk 9:8a); still others, that he was Jeremiah or another prophet (Mt 16:14b; Mk 6:15b; Lk 9:8b). Few in Galilee, it seems, had entertained the idea that Jesus was the Christ, though this possibility had been discussed in Judea (cf. Jn 7:28–31, 41; 9:22), in Samaria (Jn 4:29), and perhaps even in Phoenicia (Mt 15:22). Now, Jesus wants to know, what did the disciples think? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**8:29-30** Jesus then asks the crucial question: “What about you? Who do you say I am?” The Twelve saw all that the general public had seen. But had they perceived more? Would they let the revelations lead them to a different conclusion? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Peter answers for them all: “You are the Christ.” Unchurched people today may assume that Christ is Jesus’ last name, but it is a title which asserts that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills God’s OT promises. Greek Christ translates Hebrew *Messiah*, “Anointed One.” The technical term is so important that it is adopted into other languages, but the word translation also requires a cultural one. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The OT practice of anointing was common. A “messiah/anointed one” was one chosen and consecrated by God for a special assignment, most often as high priest (Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:15; cf. Ps 84:9), or as king (1 Sam 24:7–11; 26:9–23; cf. Is 45:1). While all the kings and priests foreshadowed Jesus, God’s “Messiah/Anointed One,” he is prominently in view in passages such as Pss 2:2; 18:50; 89:51; 132:10, 17; Dan 9:25–26. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

An example of anointing that illustrates the future promise is in 1 Samuel 16. Samuel anoints the boy David. He does not become king until many years and battles later, but God had chosen him for the job. It was his, by God's promise. *Contemporary illustration:* In November of leap years we elect a president. He is president-elect, the "chosen one," until January 20, when he actually assumes the office. Though the Father chose his Son to save us back in eternity, and declared that choice to mankind in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15), thousands of years passed before the Son arrived to assume his throne via the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

"Messiah" became an important, though often misdefined, term in Judaism. Peter has the right definition. Parallel accounts in Matthew (16:16) and Luke (9:20) tell us that Peter recognizes the unique person of Christ as the Son of God. We confess the same when we say that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God. We may not know exactly how the Son is begotten from eternity, but we know that only the Father and the Son have this relationship. Peter picks Jesus out of a lineup. Jesus is different from all the prophets. After centuries of promises, Jesus so rapidly fulfills the OT that those who have been watching him closely identify him as the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

We see Jesus as the Christ today not as a promise given, but as a promise kept. In a sense the meaning of "Messiah" has changed because we are no longer looking for him; we have seen him. But as Jesus predicted, impostors still send in their resumes for the job. David Koresh got attention, but not the job. About 800 people in the United States today claim to be the Messiah. But Peter and we who share his confession of faith know that the job was reserved from eternity for Jesus alone, and we read in the gospels how he carried it out. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The pronoun *humeis* makes Jesus' question emphatic: "But who do *you* [*humeis*] say that I am?" Probably the disciples were flummoxed by the question. Then Peter comes to the fore, possibly serving as the spokesman for the apostles (Lane, 290, on the basis of Mk 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29): "You [*su*] are the Christ." This is much shorter—and so more poignant—than Luke's "the Christ of God" (Lk 9:20) or Matthew's "the Christ, the son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). But in each account the essence of the confession is the same. In the Old Testament, the priest or king is God's anointed (cf. 1 Sam 26:9, 11; 2 Sam 23:1; Ps 105:15), and in Ps 2:2, "Anointed" clearly refers to the Christ (cf. Dan 9:25; Lk 4:18; Acts 4:25–26; 10:38; Heb 1:9). Peter's confession was borne of faith yet, as the course of this text shows, indicates a misunderstanding (Mk 8:31–33; 10:35–45). False hopes were associated with the title "Christ" in the first century, so Jesus charged the disciples to say nothing to anyone—as indeed he had done earlier when demons identified him (Mk 1:25; 3:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**8:29** *who do you say I am* – Jesus' point in pressing this question of His identity is to get the disciples to recognize and acclaim Him as the Christ. (TLSB)

*Christ.* Because popular Jewish ideas associated with the term "Christ" were largely political and national, Jesus seldom used it. Of its seven occurrences in Mark, only three appear in the sayings of Jesus (9:41; 12:35; 13:21), and in none of these does he use the title of himself (with the possible exception of 9:41). Mark identifies Jesus as the Christ in 1:1. (CSB)

Although Mark begins by identifying Jesus as the Christ (1:1, 11), this is the first time the disciples correctly identify Jesus as the Messiah. In Mark, however, Peter does not confess at this time that Jesus is the Son of God. (TLSB)



**8:27-30** For the first time in Mk, one of the Twelve recognizes Jesus as the Christ, God's Anointed One. How slow we are and how dull is our understanding of Jesus' divinity! We see and yet do not see. And so it is that Jesus graciously continues revealing Himself to us through Word and Sacrament. His Spirit works in us the faith that claims, "Jesus is the Christ." • Lord Jesus, help us to see You as the true Son of the Father, the Christ anointed as our prophet, priest, and king. Rule us graciously for all eternity. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Jesus Predicts His Death*

**31 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. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."**

**34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."**

**8:31–10:52** A new section begins in 8:31 and centers on three predictions of Jesus' death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). It indicates a geographical shift from Galilee, where most of Jesus' public ministry reported by Mark took place, to Jerusalem and the closing days of Jesus' life on earth. In this section Jesus defines the true meaning of "Christ" as the title applies to him. (CSB)

**8:31-35** Because Peter got the first answer right (remember the commendation that Jesus gives him in other gospels), Jesus goes on to the next lesson. He tells them in clear language what must happen because he is the Messiah. He gives a Reader's Digest version of our OT Reading and Isaiah 53. Peter, perhaps with head swollen from knowing the right answer to the first question, disagrees with the Teacher in the next lesson. He warns that talk of rejection and death does not sit well with the general public, nor with the Teacher's students. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Then Jesus, who had given Peter an A+ for the first answer, kicks Peter out of the class. "Out of my sight, Satan!" is strong language. Jesus must reject the temptation to skip the part in the Messiah's job description about suffering and dying. That assignment comes from God, not people; and only Satan would benefit from changing it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Those of us who preach get to proclaim the message, "You are the Christ," as we point to Jesus of Nazareth. In repeating Peter's confession we give our own. Could we follow our confession by putting our foot in our mouth as Peter did? Could we also try to change Jesus' plan? Do we like (and do we follow) Jesus' instructions to love sinners, look for the strays, accept the rejected, feed the hungry, etc.? When we confess that Jesus is the Messiah of God, we also commit ourselves to love all people, even when that means bearing a cross ourselves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Peter's confession immediately preceding our text (vv 27–30) is most important. The parallel accounts in Mt 16:13–28 and Lk 9:18–27 provide further insight. Peter proclaims Jesus as the Christ, the Anointed One. Peter's confession, however, is quickly followed by allowing himself to be an instrument of Satan, tempting Jesus to forsake his mission as the Christ. Our text then presents the true role and purpose of the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:31-32** The first three infinitives in v 31 that depend on the impersonal *dei* ("it is necessary")—namely, *pathein* ("to suffer"), *apodokimasthēnai* ("to be rejected [after scrutiny]"), and *apoktanthēnai* ("to be killed")—provide "a remarkably complete outline of the Passion" (H. B. Swete, *Commentary on Mark* [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1978], 178; all quotations used by permission), such as we might expect in the Lenten season. However, the last infinitive of the series (*anastēnai*, "to arise") anticipates Easter and our Lord's great victory "after three days" (*meta treis hēmeras* [also in Mk 9:31; 10:34]; cf. *dia triōn hēmerōn*, Mk 14:58). The latter turns of phrase possibly derive from Hos 6:2 (LXX, author's translation, emphasis added): "He shall heal us after two days; on the third day we shall rise [*en tēi hēmerai tēi tritēi anastēsometha*]" (so argues Swete, 179). Hence, it was Easter victory, and not just gory details associated with the Passion, that Jesus elaborated upon during his close proximity with the Twelve (cf. v 32a: "he said this plainly [*parrēsiai*]"). Peter could not abide it. His rebuke of Jesus for proclaiming the Gospel [*ho Petros auton ērxato epitiman autōi*] recalls Jesus' earlier rebuke of the disciples for bruiting about the idea that Jesus was a "Messiah" in the popular misunderstanding (cf. v 30 above). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**8:31 began** – Peter's confession (v 29) and Jesus' teaching of his suffering initiate a turning point in his ministry, indicated by "began." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The time had come for the impending Passion to be presented to the disciples in a straightforward way. They still have in mind the things of men and glory. The theology of the cross was a necessity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

*Son of Man.* Jesus' most common title for himself, used 81 times in the Gospels and never used by anyone but Jesus. In Da 7:13–14 the Son of Man is pictured as a heavenly figure who in the end times is entrusted by God with authority, glory and sovereign power. That Jesus used "Son of Man" as a Messianic title is evident by his use of it (v. 31) in juxtaposition to Peter's use of "Christ" (v. 29). (CSB)

*must suffer.* As predicted in the suffering servant passage in Isa 52:13–53:12 (see Mk 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33–34; 14:21, 41). (CSB)

*dei:* Jesus' suffering and death was necessary. His resurrection on the third day is clearly stated. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

Though Isaiah 52:13-53:12 predicted that God's Servant would suffer and die for the benefit of His people, the disciples would prove unable to accept such suffering. Jesus repeats this prediction twice in Mark (9:31; 10:33-34), so that there end up being three Passion predictions, one for each of Peter's denials in 14:66-72. After each Passion prediction, Jesus continues by teaching about discipleship. (TLSB)

*be rejected* – *Apodokimasthēnai* means "to be rejected after scrutiny," referring to the examinations of Christ during his trial. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*elders.* The lay members of the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews. (CSB)

*chief priests.* These included the ruling high priest, Caiaphas; the former high priest, Annas; and the high priestly families. (CSB)

*teachers of the law.* Representatives of the three groups mentioned here constituted the Sanhedrin. (CSB)

*after three days* – He also added a note of final victory. But this the disciples constantly forgot, so shocked were they by the fact that he, their Lord and Master, would suffer and die. That’s why the resurrection actually took them by surprise. These words at first glance seem to be in accordance with the fact that “on” the third day Christ rose from the dead. However, this was the Hebrew way of speaking. “After three days” did not necessarily mean after three full days, but the passing of parts of three days. (PBC)

**8:32** *said this plainly* – He did this in order that his disciples might understand that his being Christ, as Peter had confessed him in their name, did not make him an earthly king – a false hope that continued to linger in their hearts until his ascension. (PBC)

There was constant misunderstanding. And "afraid" is a constant state of fear even to ask a single question. By the way, their lack of understanding cannot be blamed on Jesus. Look at Matthew 17:23 and Luke 9:45. The amazing thing is that Jesus was so patient (and still is with us.) Lack of faith was displaced by fear which led to the pride about to be revealed in the next verses. (Buls)

Parrēsiai means “plainly, frankly” (BAGD, p. 630), no longer in parables or figures of speech (Jn 16:29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus was explicit (“plainly,” *parrēsia*). Peter understood quite well that suffering and death were not a part of his view of the Messiah’s role. Peter’s rebuke of Jesus for thinking of such a defeat, rather than envisioning triumph and victory, is so natural to the human mind. Only God himself could have come forward with his perfect plan of salvation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

*Peter ... began to rebuke him.* Suffering and rejection had no place in Peter’s conception of the Messiah, and he rebuked Jesus for teaching what to him seemed not only inconceivable but terribly wrong. (CSB)

Peter will not accept a suffering Christ until after the resurrection. Like most Jews of his day, Peter expects a powerful warrior and conquering Messiah. Ironically, Jesus has been the one to silence others (cf. 1:25-26). Now, however, Peter tries to silence Jesus. (TLSB)

**8:33-35** Jesus turned sharply on Peter (for *epistrapheis*, cf. Mk 5:30; Jn 21:20) and, upon seeing the disciples (who probably entertained similar views), immediately took Peter to task: “The Lord recognizes his great adversary in Peter, who for the moment acts Satan’s part” (Swete, 181). But by his dying and rising, Jesus beats down Satan underfoot (cf. the Litany, *LSB*, p. 289), a reality to be shared not only with Peter by way of rebuke but also with the other disciples, the crowd (whom Jesus now summons to his side), and—indeed—any Christian. Thus, taking up one’s cross, following Jesus, and losing one’s life for Jesus’ sake has less to do with loyal self-sacrifice (thus Swete, 182) or personal commitment (thus Lane, 305) than being conjoined to Jesus in

one's own dying and rising with him (cf. Rom 6:5–7; Gal 2:20). This happens in Baptism and as one shoulders the cross that God gives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**8:33** *turning and seeing his disciples* – They all had the wrong view and needed correction. (PBC)

*rebuked Peter* – Jesus is, in fact, correcting all of the Twelve, since none can accept the necessity of His sacrificial death. (TLSB)

*Satan*. Peter's attempt to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross held the same temptation Satan gave at the outset of Jesus' ministry (see Mt 4:8–10), so Jesus severely rebuked him. (CSB)

The refusal to accept God's plan of having Jesus die for all is devilish, for it threaten to undo the divine plan of salvation. (TLSB)

Satana -*the accuser*, that is, the *devil*:—Satan. (QV)

Jesus addresses Peter as Satana, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name and term satan, "Satan, accuser." The theology of glory appeals to natural man, who seeks to obtain glory the easy way—without suffering and death. Peter appeals to Jesus in the same vein as Satan did during Jesus' 40-day temptation (Mk 1:12–13; Mt 4:1–11). God's way, however, is the theology of the cross. The suffering and death of Christ, and of the Old Adam in each of us, must precede entrance into glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

*not setting your mind on the things of God* – This inability to accept a suffering Savior involves the refusal of the will of God, whose sovereign disposition of the problem of sin and human rebellion fails to conform to the niceties of human expectations. Jesus shows no inclination to justify the ways of God to men. He simply affirms that the way of the cross is the will of God. (Lane)

To accept Jesus' suffering and believe in the resurrection is a divine gift. Cf. Php. 2:5-11). (TLSB)

We can easily relate to Peter's struggle. Isaiah brings it home: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Is 55:8). Our sinful flesh has in mind the things of men. It is precisely because of this, though, that Jesus must go to the cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:34-38** Jesus now applies the implications of His own Messiahship to the lives of His followers. Just as He willingly submits to God's will, even when that is painful, so they must also submit. Augustine: "The first destruction of man was the love of himself...Prefer to this God's will; learn to love yourself by not loving yourself" (NPNF1 6:408). (TLSB)

**8:34** *calling the crowd to him* – By doing this Jesus indicates that the conditions for following him are relevant for all believers, and not for the disciples alone. (Lane)

Many in the crowds had been following Christ for entirely material reason. Many were also defecting when it became clear that Jesus would not consent to become an earthly "bread" king. (PBC)

*deny himself.* Cease to make self the object of his life and actions. (CSB)

The present tense of “follow” indicates a continuing activity. There is no instant “quick fix” to avoid suffering; rather, cross-bearing lasts throughout the follower’s life. Jesus addresses his words to everyone, not only the disciples; they apply not just to pastors today, but to all church members. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

*hostis thelei opisō mou elthein*, “If anyone would come after me . . .” To “come after me” is to be attached to Jesus. Attached how? *aparnēsasthō heauton, kai aratō ton stauron autou, kai akoloutheitō moi*, “he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” This is wonderfully stated by Paul: “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Cor 5:15). Jesus’ Passion is our passion to serve him, not because we must, but because we now desire to, by his grace. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions” (Gal 5:24). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

*aparneoma* to *deny utterly*, that is, *disown, abstain* (QV) – Jerome James, Seattle SuperSonic’s Center, responding to coach Nate McMillians’s charges that he is selfish: “I don’t have the first clue who he is talking about, because all I worry about is Jerome.” (Sports Illustrated – Feb. 17, 2003)

*take up his cross.* The picture is of a man, already condemned, required to carry the beam of his own cross to the place of execution (see Jn 19:17). Cross-bearing is a willingness to suffer and die for the Lord’s sake. – The cross was an instrument of death, and the phrase “take up his cross” refers to hardships and even death suffered as a result of being a follower of Jesus. While many today use the phrase “bearing a cross” to refer to everything from illnesses to layoffs, the phrase is properly used to refer to suffering which occurs as a direct result of the Christian faith. (CSB)

Accept the burdens of being an imitator of Christ. Augustine: “Let him bear whatever trouble he has, so let him follow Me. From when he shall begin to follow Me in conformity to My life and precept, he will have many to contradict him...and that from among those are even as it were Christ’s companions. (TLSB)

Bearing the cross was not a Jewish metaphor, and Jesus’ statement must have sounded repugnant to the crowd and the disciples alike. The saying evokes the picture of a condemned man going out to die who is forced to carry on his back the cross-beam upon which he is to be nailed at the place of execution. By the time Mark prepared his Gospel this had become cruel reality, both for Jesus and the church. (Lane)

The idea of carrying a cross while following Jesus probably refers to the fact that the condemned criminal carried the cross-beam to the stake at the place of execution. Crucifixion developed from a variety of methods of impaling that were practiced by the Babylonians and Persians. The Romans used it for executing political enemies of the state, as was well known in Palestine; e.g. ca. 2 B.C. the Roman governor Varus crucified 2000 Jews in quelling a revolt. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*and follow me.* Implying that his own death would be by crucifixion. (CSB)

Christians follow Jesus through suffering and death and into resurrection. (TLSB)

akoloutaeo to *be in the same way with*, that is, to *accompany* (specifically as a disciple):—follow, reach. (QV)

There is no instant “quick fix” to avoid suffering; rather, cross-bearing last throughout the follower’s life. Jesus addresses his words to everyone, not only the disciples; they apply not just to pastors today, but to all members. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

**8:35** *save his life*. Physical life may be saved by denying Jesus, but eternal life will be lost. Conversely, discipleship may result in the loss of physical life, but that loss is insignificant when compared with gaining eternal life. (CSB)

The mystery of Jesus’ suffering for the life of the world turns upside down everything the disciples know and imagine. In order to save their lives they must be willing to give them up. (TLSB)

In developing the thought of the supreme value of life in its deepest sense, Jesus employed language drawn from commercial life: profit, gain, loss, give in exchange. A comparison of values is the proper setting for consideration of profit and loss. Corresponding to the advantage gained – the whole world – is the payment which must be forfeited – authentic life. But the ledger involves values which cannot really be compared. The loss even of ordinary human life is in no way compensated by winning the world; how much more is this true of eternal life. (Lane)

The principle of discipleship now follows. *Psuchē* can mean “life,” “soul,” or “self,” and here probably includes all three. The person who is saved gains eternal life and the preservation of his soul, while those who are lost enter the “second death” and experience everlasting destruction of their selves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Here again we see the paradoxical nature of the theology of the cross. Attempts at self-preservation fail, while those who risk all for Christ and live with selfless abandon will be saved. Note that losing one’s life for the Gospel is equivalent to losing it for Christ himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Losing one’s life (literally, “his soul,” *tēn psuchēn autou*) is possible when it is done for the sake of the Gospel. Losing is saving (*sōsei*, from *sōzō*). Jesus is the ultimate example, as he lost his life so we could be saved. For the sake of the Gospel and its salvation, we, by grace, no longer want to live for ourselves. A miracle! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

Mark’s first readers had already experienced that in their lives and were to experience even more. Christians today also are not being spared. In many countries they are being persecuted because of their faith. In our own country atheistic propaganda is growing more powerful and, at times, even influences laws and courts. The cross and being loyal to Christ always go together. (PBC)

**8:36-37** These verses give the eternal perspective. Other “gains” in this world may be far more appealing and for the moment seem far more worthy of pursuit than following a crucified Criminal. But in light of eternity, isn’t it well worth the “loss” of all worldly prizes, since none of them, not even all of them combined, could possibly amount to the redemption price of our soul/life/self? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus perhaps chose several of the technical expressions (e.g., *kerdēsai*, “to gain,” v 36a; *zēmiōthēnai*, “to forfeit,” v 36b; *antallagma*, “recompense,” v 37) because the population of the

northern towns was deeply occupied in the pursuit of wealth (Swete, 183). Luther supposed that being ashamed of Christ and not speaking up for him means compromise in the face of persecution. The Christian, however, must bear up. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

“What can a man give in exchange for his soul?” Nothing! It took God in human flesh dying on the cursed tree. This is sticker shock for those who think they can come up with the payment themselves. May we, “in this adulterous and sinful generation” (*en tēi geneai tautēi tēi moichalidi kai hamartōlōi*), remain faithful to the covenant of marriage with him, the Bridegroom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

Jesus underlines the foolishness of chasing after a fading world while being robbed of eternal life. No wealth but Christ’s blood can be exchanged for one’s soul (1 Peter 1:18-19). Augustine: “Great is the world, but greater is He by whom the world was made. Fair is the world; but fairer is He by whom the world was made. Evil is the world; and good is He by whom the world was made” (NPNF1 6:410). (TLSB)

**8:36** *the whole world*. All the things that could possibly be achieved or acquired in this life. (CSB)

In developing the thought of the supreme value of life in its deepest sense, Jesus employed language drawn from commercial life: profit, gain, loss, give in exchange. A comparison of values is the proper setting for a consideration of profit and loss. Corresponding to the advantage gained – the whole world – is the payment which must be forfeited – authentic life. But the ledger involves values which cannot really be compared. The loss even of ordinary human life is in no way compensated by winning the world; how much more is this true of eternal life! (Lane)

*soul*. That is, eternal life (also in v. 37). (CSB)

**8:37** *give in exchange for his soul* – Here Jesus supposes the case of a man who has lost his soul and now wants to regain it. The answer to the question Jesus possesses is “nothing.” (Buls)

**8:38** *ashamed of me and of my words*. Contrast Ro 1:16. A person who is more concerned about fitting into and pleasing his own “adulterous and sinful generation” than about following and pleasing Christ will have no part in God’s kingdom. (CSB)

The disciples as yet refuse to accept Jesus as the suffering Messiah or to confess Him truly. Jesus graciously promises a reward for those who accept the necessity of His death and confess Him as Savior before the world (Mt. 10:32). Jesus emphasizes His Word (“gospels,” v. 35) as the basis of faith, life and salvation. This continues the emphasis on preaching begun (1:14-15). (TLSB)

There will be many such persons who are ashamed, since the cross is a scandal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*this adulterous and sinful sinful generation* – The word “adulterous” harkens back to the OT picture of God’s people, Israel, as his wife who is unfaithful to him (e.g. Hosea; Ezekiel 16 and 23). The NT picture of the church as Christ’s spotless bride (Eph 5:21-33) contrasts with the world as Babylon, the mother of harlots (Revelation 17). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

*when he comes in the glory of his Father.* See 2Th 1:6–10. The situation in which Jesus is rejected, humiliated and put to death will be reversed when he returns in glory as the Judge of all men. (CSB)

Ambrose: “The angels come in obedience, He comes in glory: they are His retainers, He sits upon His throne: they stand, He is seated – to borrow terms of the daily dealings of human life, He is the judge: they are the officers of the court” (NPNF2 10:257). (TLSB)