

**Scripture Reading: Mark 8:41 – 9:9**

**“27 Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" 28 So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; & others, one of the prophets." 29 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." 30 Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. 31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." 34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."**

**Mark 9:1 And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." 2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"-- 6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. 7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" 8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. 9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”**

## **"Jesus the Beloved Son: Hear Him"**

**Well I must say that my short series on the Gospel According to Mark is going by much too quickly!**

**Next week we come to Psalm Sunday where we will consider the triumphant entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem at His appointed time to be the sacrifice for sin. On Good Friday we will consider His suffering and death and then on Easter morning we celebrate the power and glory of His resurrection from the dead! I trust that these messages have been helpful and that we will all come away knowing Jesus better and challenged to continue on in our study of and meditation on the Gospel accounts.**

- We began by considering the Gospel: Jesus has come to save His people from their sins!**

**We saw the humanity of Jesus in His baptism, circumcision & temptations. We saw His divinity proclaimed with the Father saying He was His beloved Son after John's baptism.**

**We saw how Jesus chose and trained His disciples who would become the Apostles and foundation of the Church. We saw how Satan and his demons did all they could to oppose Jesus, but were powerless in His presence. We saw Jesus as the Great Physician who in His compassion healed many and taught us that we would do even greater things in His name. We considered His use of parables to teach the truths about His Kingdom...**

- And last week we saw Jesus as the Lord of Creation!**

However, not even a quick summary of any of the Gospel accounts could be complete without considering how and why Jesus interacted with the Scribes and Pharisees.

We will strive to do that this morning looking at who they were...

Why they opposed Jesus, and even crucified the Lord of Glory...

And of course the lessons we should learn for today.

- Now you might wonder why I chose the passage from Mark chapters 8 & 9 as my text since it has little mention of the Scribes & Pharisees!

There is a method to my madness, so please bear with me. I have often made the point that there will really only be one basic question at the final judgment: What have you done with my Beloved Son Jesus?

- In our text we see Jesus drawing this truth out from His disciples, with Peter properly proclaiming "You are the Christ"
- As the Angel Gabriel proclaimed, Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ who has come to save His people from their sins.

We must remember that Christ is not the last name that was given to Jesus! It is His title, just as we would call someone a Supervisor or Governor or President... Some of the confusion may come because we often put the title first today but when I say President Obama I am not implying that 'president' is his first name.

In the other Gospel accounts Jesus makes clear that this has been revealed to Peter by The Father and just as the parables revealed the truth to those with ears to hear, Peter begins to understand. However, He still has a long way to go because it is not long before his human understanding takes over once more... Jesus goes on to explain how the Messiah must suffer, die, & be resurrected because He has come to save His people from their sins. Peter takes Jesus aside and tries to tell Him that this must not be, Jesus needs to be alive and strong to lead His people to victory!

- Jesus then rebukes Peter in front of the disciples by saying, "get thee behind me Satan."
- Why was Peter rebuked so strongly?

Jesus immediately tells him why & it is a good definition of satanic activity... "For you are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men."

*[we should all be thinking about that the next time we let those morning devotions slip by because we are just TOO BUSY with other things.]*

And just so there could be no doubt about what Jesus meant He gathered others around and said, "'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'"

Far too often we think about self-denial and taking up our cross as physical suffering of some sort:

We must remember the context in which Jesus proclaimed this truth: Denying yourself or losing your life means being mindful of God's things and not man's things...

- Making God's priorities and ways your priorities and ways is the real sacrifice!
- A burden or yoke that Jesus said was easy... In His strength!

Peter had followed Jesus and was beginning to learn that He was in fact the Messiah...

**BUT**, he still wanted things to progress in the way that he thought was best!

**From a human perspective there was NO way he could understand how what Jesus was explaining about his suffering and death was going to lead to victory for the Messiah: So he took Jesus aside to set Him straight.**

**As we said at the beginning of this series, saving faith must accept who Jesus really was AND what He really came to do! Jesus was teaching them the truth that had been revealed in the Old Testament through Moses and the Prophets.**

- **Peter was struggling, but he was learning and Jesus would go on to give him the most powerful illustrated sermon ever given!**

**Peter, John and James are taken to a mountain where Jesus is transfigured and seen in as much of His divine glory as human beings can endure. Jesus appears with Moses & Elijah: The Law and the Prophets and we know from other Gospel accounts that they talked about the suffering and death of Jesus, just as Jesus had been teaching the disciples. Once again the Father comes in the cloud to proclaim the truth about Jesus saying, “This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!”**

- **And then suddenly, they are alone with Jesus!**

**Jesus tells them on the way down to keep these things until after He has risen from the dead, and while we know that Peter did not yet fully understand what was going to take place in Jerusalem, he does not object or get rebuked... He is learning to know that Jesus is in fact God’s beloved Son who has come to save His people from their sins!**

- **So what does all of this have to do with the Scribes and Pharisees?**

**Much in every way, because just as the Gospel accounts show Peter and the other disciples learning to know that Jesus is the Father’s beloved Son, these religious leaders of Israel are clearly shown to be rejecting this truth.**

**By Pentecost, the disciples will be fully empowered by God’s Spirit prepared to proclaim this truth to all the world! At the same time, the leaders of Israel will have been fully rejected with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple coming in their generation!**

**This does not mean that every single one of these leaders of Israel were lost... Just as there was an apostate among the disciples in the person of Judas we see Pharisees like Nicodemus and perhaps Joseph of Arimathea coming to saving faith.**

- **So who were the Scribes and Pharisees?**

**They were the religious leaders of Israel in that day and divided into two basic camps:**

**The former, often called the Sadducees were what we would call religious liberals because while they claimed to believe the Scriptures, they denied the resurrection which they clearly taught.**

**We can think of many examples today in the modern liberal churches where you still have beautiful Bibles on display and passages read during the services...**

- **But at the same time they clearly deny who Jesus was and what He came to do.**

**The Pharisees on the other hand believed in the resurrection and the coming of Messiah: Their sin was pride and presumption adding to the truth of God’s Word and wanted God to do things their way as Peter was first tempted to do.**

**They would be what we would call legalists or hypocrites today: Those who might be quick today to demand that Christians have NO contact with alcohol and fight against any change to the definition of marriage...**

- While at the same time never lifting a finger to discipline the rampant fornication and adultery present in our churches today!

Mark, as do the other writers of the Gospel accounts shows a great deal of the interaction of Jesus with these men.

In the passages that we have read from the first two chapters of Mark we have seen demons in their synagogues, their challenge to Jesus forgiving sins, their rejection of tax-collectors and sinners and their insistence on following all of their many rules regarding how to eat and spend the Lord's Day.

In chapter three we come to their outright rejection of Jesus in a very dramatic confrontation:

Mark 3:1 "And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." 4 Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

**But they kept silent.**

5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."

And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him"

Why did these leaders remain silent?

Because they did not want to face the simple truth that His question would draw out: Of course it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath! Of course it is better to heal than to kill.

They cared more about accusing Jesus than they did about the God's Law or this man who was suffering in their midst and thus Jesus looks at them with anger. Their hardened hearts grieved Jesus and His miracle only hardened them further.

Peter was just as wrong in his theology when he took Jesus aside to correct Him and was rebuked with words none of us would want to hear from any leaders in the Church, no less from Jesus Himself.

With this contrast we see that Jesus was not angry with Peter and that Peter did not have a hardened heart...

- Just a confused heart as many of us often do as well as we mature in the faith.

As we move on in Mark chapter three we come to another warning from Jesus that has caused some confusion down through the ages... Jesus speaks of the unforgiveable sin, but please note that it can only apply to those with hardened hearts like these religious leaders:

It is time for the intellectuals to try and put Jesus in His place so at verse 22 we read: Mark 3:22: "22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." 23 So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. 27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. 28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"-- 30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

With ALL of the opposition and cruelty that Jesus faced from these religious leaders He could still say to them as they stood mocking Him at the foot of the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." All of their sins against the Son could be forgiven through the very work the Son was doing right in front of them.

However the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven because it is His work to call us to repentance... We saw this in the Book of Acts where the Spirit testified through the Apostles that Jesus whom they crucified had been made both Lord and Christ.

- The ONLY unforgivable sin is to resist the Spirit's call to repent and believe the Gospel.

Think of the two thieves crucified with Jesus who were both guilty of capital crimes for which they were being punished & they were BOTH mocking Jesus as His crucifixion began... In the end one yielded to the urging of the Spirit to repent and believe and the other did not... The repentant criminal joined Jesus in paradise as a forgiven sinner and the other chose an eternity to suffer under the penalty of his sins.

- So what does all of this mean for us today?
- Well obviously, our desire should be to avoid being Scribes or Pharisees.

If we hold to the authority of the Scriptures we avoid the danger of being those religious liberals and we will talk much more about this as we study the Book of Beginnings: Genesis!

I truly believe that in modern America it is the Pharisee ditch that is much harder to avoid: Mark gives us some insight into this with an extended exchange between Jesus and these religious leaders...

Mark 7:1 "Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches."

- These leaders and the people that followed them were very good at putting on all the outward trappings of religion and devotion in an attempt to keep the inside clean...

5 "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked [Jesus], "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" 6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' 8 "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." 9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 11 But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban" --' (that is, a gift to God), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13 making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

- Jesus then broadens His audience to make the point that will drive those who do not have hardened hearts to their need for the Gospel...

14 "When He had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. 16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that

whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" 20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

The proud Pharisee Saul who became the repentant Apostle Paul often cited his own life as the supreme example of how it is impossible to please God by keeping all of the outward rules and ordinances. Martin Luther learned and proclaimed the same lesson in the midst of the Reformation showing that there was no way to merit the merit of Christ... No human works could attain His righteousness.

Why? Because Jesus said that "out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness."

- This is why Jesus had to come to save His people from their sins!
- This is why it had to be the Son of God who came in the flesh to save man from His sin.
- This is why He had to be the suffering Messiah in order to save His people from their sins.

This is truly why we should rejoice to hear the Apostle Paul proclaim in Romans chapter eight: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

### **Communion Meditation: Romans 8**

"12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."