

Who is Jesus for Us Today?

Mark 8:27-34

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?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; and others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And Jesus charged 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 said this plainly. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men."

And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, "If any person would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

I. Location, location, location

Then: Caesarea Philippi. Why is that location significant?

Now: What is our location—historical, political, religious, etc.—and why is it important?

II. Who do people say that I am?

Then: John the Baptist, but some say...and still others say...

Now: What do you hear people saying today?

III. But who do you say that I am?

Then: Peter: "You are the Christ."

Now: How do you answer?

IV. Jesus' radical alternative

Then *and* Now: "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me."

Jesus makes self-denial and cross-bearing the main criteria for following him. These are difficult, radical words. What do they mean for us today?

He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same words, 'Follow me!' and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill in our time. He commands. And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

—The Quest of the Historical Jesus by Albert Schweitzer