

Proper 19

Sunday between 11 and 17 September inclusive

Principal Service readings

Isaiah 50.4-9a	The Lord comes to the help of his disciple
Psalms 116.1-8	Thanksgiving to the God who rescues
James 3.1-12	The dangers of uncontrolled language
Mark 8.27-38	Peter professes his faith; 1st prophecy of the Passion; take up your cross

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Peter's profession of faith

²⁷Jesus 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?' ²⁸And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'
²⁹Jesus asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.'
³⁰And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

First prophecy of the Passion

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

The condition of following Christ

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose

their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Mark 8.27-38 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Jesus' question to Peter in 8.29, 'Who do you say that I am?' is the central theme of the entire gospel (Donahue and Harrington. 2002)² From the beginning, Mark has proclaimed Jesus' work as a wonder-worker and teacher. He has also shown repeatedly the misunderstandings of the Pharisees and Herodians (3.6), Jesus' family (3.21), his neighbours in Nazareth (6.1-6), and even his disciples (8.14-21).

Peter's declaration of faith stands out, so much so that there is a church feast named for it, on 18 January, in the General Roman Calendar of 1960.³ However, this incident is immediately followed by one in which Peter is told off harshly by Jesus. Why is this? The path of suffering and self-denial is far from triumphalist.

The first of three Passion predictions is given at 8.31 (the others are at 9.31 and 10.33-34 and are very similar). If Jesus really spoke about his future Passion so clearly then the disciples didn't really take it in. Or has the text been influenced by the events of chapters 14-16?

Quotations

1

There are no crown-wearers in heaven who were not cross-bearers here below.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 1834-1892

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

² *The gospel of Mark* / John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington. – Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2002. – p.264. – 978-0-8146-5965-6

³ Although the date has now been dropped from the current calendar, it is the day at the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

2

Let the first act of every morning be to make the following resolve for the day:

- I shall not fear anyone on Earth.
- I shall fear only God.
- I shall not bear ill will toward anyone.
- I shall not submit to injustice from anyone.
- I shall conquer untruth by truth. And in resisting untruth, I shall put up with all suffering.

Mahatma Gandhi, 1869-1948

Related topics

For further study:

Paschal mystery; cross; mystery of suffering; non-violence; humility; conversion; servanthood; discipleship; reign of God; Christology; ministry; martyrdom; Christian witness

Closing Prayer

Gracious God,
open our ears to your word
that we may listen and be taught as your disciples.
Grant that our faith in Jesus as the Christ
may not grow fearful at the sight of the cross,
but may remain steadfast in him,
and take flesh in works of charity for those in need.
We make this prayer in his name,
our Saviour for ever and ever.

Celebrating the Christian Year, Proper 19, Year B⁴

⁴ *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C* / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.