

PREPARING AT HOME

September 10-16, 2018

Focus reading: Mark 8:27–38 (bible.oremus.org/?ql=402727482)

Other lectionary readings: Proverbs 1:20–33; Psalm 19; James 3:1–12

Theme: Who Are You, Jesus?

This passage comes at the half-way point in Mark and is often referred to as a “hinge point.” The narrative up to this point has focused on Jesus’ ministry, first in Galilean territory and then in Gentile territories. From this point on Jesus, his disciples, and Mark’s theology will be moving toward Jerusalem and the cross. We have already noted that geography is important in Mark’s gospel. In this reading, Jesus and his disciples travel to Caesarea Philippi, the location of a shrine where people worshipped many different gods of various names. Here, with the journey to Jerusalem ahead of them, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” (verse 27) and finally “But who do you say that I am?” (verse 29). The disciples know the “right” answers to Jesus’ question. They know the Messianic names, but they misunderstand what those titles mean. Like their contemporaries, the disciples are pinning their hopes on a Messiah who will lead a political revolt against the Roman empire that oppresses them and holds them powerless. When Jesus predicts his own suffering, Peter refuses to hear what he is saying. It doesn’t fit with his theology or his expectation of a warrior Messiah! To make matters worse, Jesus makes it clear that his followers will share in his suffering; for his identity shapes his followers’ identity. Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples for the crosses that are ahead – his and theirs. The victory that they seek will come, but the road will be marked with suffering.

YOU ARE THE MESSIAH

When Jesus asks who people say that he is, the disciples respond that some call him the Messiah. That was a title that held great meaning for the people of Jesus’ time. It conjured up images of a great warrior, related to King David, who would free them from the Roman Empire. How was Jesus different from the Messiah they were expecting? How do you feel when someone is not who you expected them to be? Note that Jesus does not call himself the “Messiah” but rather “Son of Man.” What does that name mean? Why might that be the case?

WHO IS JESUS?

Brainstorm how people might answer that question today. How might you and your child answer that question? What titles or names of Jesus are most meaningful to you? Invite you child to create an illustrated book that answers the question, “Who Is Jesus?”

PRAYER

Loving God,
We give thanks for Jesus,
Teacher, Friend, Example, Healer (Use your own words)
Savior.
May we be more like him.
Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org