

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

September 15, 2024



MESSIAH

and a new kind of leader

by Drew Downs

When Peter calls Jesus a Messiah, it is because he sees him as the hoped-for leader of the the people. And that mantle of Messiah has certain expectations, the most significant is leading the people into liberation from oppression.

How did others wear this mantle in the past? As military leaders, rulers, and kings. Pulling the people along and defeating the oppressors with violence.

Jesus accepts the mantle with the same purpose of liberation, but with a completely different vision for how to make this happen.

Like many leaders who try to change the script, it is difficult to pull off because of those expectations. So even we have come to believe that violence is required for liberation. Jesus helps us learn to let go of these expectations and focus on the mission of liberation through love.

ORDINARY TIME

2024

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Picnic in the Park

This week we are once again "taking our act on the road" and gathering in the midst of nature to experience the love of Christ together in the world. Our annual Eucharist and picnic in the park is a blessed time of togetherness and joy in creation.

If you haven't been, or been in awhile, we gather at 10:00 in Hawthorn Park, east of Terre Haute (near Rose Hulman). I always use my phone's GPS to help me find it! But it is a beautiful, secluded park that feels like the middle of nowhere, even as it is so close to the city.

We worship and feast together. There is a labyrinth near the pavilion, which can serve as a great meditative opportunity to walk and pray. There are restrooms nearby and playground!

For our feasting, we have chicken and hot dogs that will be generously offered, so you are invited to contribute what you wish, a casserole, side, salad, bread, chips, or dessert!

We encourage you to consider bringing your own plates and flatware to minimize waste, but we have *plenty* and will have disposable plates and forks for those that don't bring them.

I hope you will join us, sharing in this time, this place, and this joyous opportunity to feast with others and witness Christ in our midst!

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 19B

September 15, 2024

Collect

○ God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 8:27-38

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

Then 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. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But 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."

He 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. For 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. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those 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."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

This passage reflects a real turning point in the gospel of Mark. Here, Jesus turns his face to Jerusalem and moves toward the crucifixion to come. We see this in the dramatic change in language, which went from being about healing and proclaiming to carrying a cross. This isn't a dark image, but it is a move from hope to sacrifice. Which, as we know in our own lives, elicits a different gut response from people.

What we see is a situation we might call "mission confusion". It isn't that the disciples completely misunderstand what's going on. They're right about half of it. But then come to the wrong conclusion about it.

It is fair to say that Peter offers the right answer in calling Jesus the Messiah. But it is clear that he doesn't know what that means *to Jesus*. We might even say that Peter doesn't understand *what kind of Messiah Jesus is*. If he did, he wouldn't be trying to protect him.

We shouldn't begrudge Peter (or any disciples) for this misunderstanding. This is a pretty natural confusion—and based in Jesus's own *unconventional* Messiahship. But I also think this mistake is part of our takeaway. Because it is one we continue to make. When we make Jesus all-powerful. A ruler of men. A vision of conqueror, rather than the sacrificial lamb.

I like to compare this moment to a midterm exam—because it is a test of what has come before and we'll need to remember that as we proceed into the second half of the story. What we find there builds on the first half. It just won't be the same stuff all over again. It is new stuff. And the disciples will have a hard time letting go of that early stuff and also adapting to the new stuff.

Thankfully we can. We're actually pretty good at it.

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