

Homily for Lent 2, 2021

Mark 8:31-38

'Ashamed of the cross'

Pastor Joshua Pfeiffer

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TEXT - Mark 8:31-38

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. 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.'

³⁴ 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. 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.'

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been embarrassed,
Or even ashamed to be seen with another person?

We aren't proud of these moments,
But we know they happen.

Or,

Have you ever had the sense that someone else was embarrassed,
Or even ashamed to be seen with *you*?

Not nice, right?

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Last Sunday we heard Psalm 25,
Which begins with a prayer that the Lord never let his people be '**put to shame**'.

The prayer is for God to save and deliver his people from a threat,
So that they aren't disgraced and humiliated – **shamed** – especially in front of
their enemies.

But in our text this week,
When the theme of shame comes up again,
It's different.

Because here it's not in connection with God's people being **put** to shame by
others,

but instead,
the situation is of Jesus' disciples *themselves* being **ashamed** to be associated
with him.

Jesus says:

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.'

I'd suggest we live in a time,
When disciples of Christ Jesus are under increasing pressure to be ashamed of
Jesus and his words.

Do you feel that?

So how do we guard ourselves,
Or perhaps better,
How does God save us,
From being those who are ashamed of Jesus?
Well, this is what our text can help us with.

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PETER'S SHAME , AND OURS

It seems fairly clear to me,
That when Jesus speaks at the end of the text about people being ashamed of him,
He has in mind here what's just happened with Peter.
As Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him,
On this reading,
His problem was that he was ashamed of Jesus.
Just think about that,
It's not just that Peter *disagreed* with Jesus,
It's not just that Peter was a bit *annoyed* with Jesus,
He was ***ashamed*** of Jesus,
Didn't want to be associated with him and the way he was talking.

So why?

What triggered Peter being ashamed?

Well, it was what Jesus had just said.

‘Then (Jesus) 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.’

It’s this talk of suffering,
Rejection by those in authority,
Death,

Peter doesn’t want to be associated with all that,

Or even with a guy that talks like that.

Peter wants to be on the ‘winning team’,
On the ‘right side of history’.

And this sounds like ‘loser talk’.

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But as always, we shouldn’t be too hard on Peter,

And we should realise just how much of a turn this is in Jesus teaching and ministry.

Think of how it began for Peter and co.

Soon after they were called,

Jesus had healed a man,

And we read that,
'...at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee'. (Mark 1:29)

Notice that word,
Fame.

I think maybe the disciples liked that fame,
Who wouldn't?

Jesus, and by extension his disciples,
were the talk of the town,

People said *'he's done all things well'*.

'That they'd never seen or heard anything like this.'

Everywhere they went people flocked to them.

Sure,
There were *some* little warning signs of another dynamic -

Opposition from the Pharisees,

the people of his own hometown at Nazareth taking **offense** at him,

But overall, up until this point,

The disciples had experienced being with Jesus in mostly positive terms,

All building up to Peter's confession of who Jesus is, 'the Christ',
The Messiah,
The promised King.

So surely their minds were thinking in terms of victory,
Honour,

Glory.

Then all of a sudden,
Jesus begins to talk about suffering and death.

And to the human way of thinking,
There's not a lot of glory and honour in that.

So the bubble was being burst,

Now, do we really want to be associated with this guy?

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It makes me think of the halls of power in Canberra,

Especially when we had those years of cycling through one prime minister after another.

A leader can have a lot of friends and supporters when things are going well,

But as soon as the shine is wearing off for one reason or another,

They start disappearing, don't they?

They're reading which way the wind is blowing,
and working out if they're on the right team.

And in those situations,

What's the test of whether a leader really has someone's support or not?

Are they willing to go out in front of the press on camera,
And be seen with this person?

Be associated with them publicly?

Or,
are they ashamed?

How might we be ashamed of Jesus and his words in our day?

Well, you've had those moments haven't you,
When a group of friends or family,
Or even strangers,
Are talking about the Church or Christianity or some aspect of Christian
teaching,
And making fun of it,

And we're tempted to laugh along,
Not to stand up,

To be ashamed.

Or perhaps it's when you were challenged at work or at school to compromise
your Christian convictions in some way,

And there's that temptation,
To be ashamed of Jesus and his words.

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JESUS' RESPONSE

So how is Jesus going to respond to this?

Well,
In a couple different ways.

First,
Jesus feels the need to speak very strongly to Peter doesn't he?

He turns and looks at the other disciples,

And Jesus rebukes Peter, *'Get behind me Satan'.*

*'For you are setting your mind not on divine things,
But on human things'.*

This being ashamed of Jesus,
Especially when it comes to his path of suffering,

is no small thing for Jesus,
it is in fact according to him,
a Satanic temptation that needs to be shut down quickly and firmly.

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But Jesus doesn't only shut it down,

What he does next is, in a sense,

Offer his solution to Peter's sense of being ashamed,
And to us.

It begins by the call to come in behind him,
and deny ourselves,
Take up our cross,
And follow him.

So, if we read through the lens of being ashamed,

what Jesus does,
is confront that issue head on,

because he calls his disciples to embrace their own cross.

Notice that?

he doesn't just say,
Follow me and be willing to let the shame of **my** cross be associated with you,

It's stronger than that,

It's take up **your** cross,

Embrace your suffering and death for my sake,

Embrace even the shame that can come from being my disciple.

He's not sugar-coating anything,
But being utterly realistic.

And just knowing that in the first place,
Can help us face this reality.

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But then Jesus goes on to tell us that we embrace the cross not as an end in itself,
But for a greater goal,

He gives us the reasons and encouragement as to why we need not be ashamed of him.

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?

Jesus is promising that although the path of following him involves suffering and the cross,

can entail ridicule and mockery,

shame before others,

This is the path that leads to life and salvation.

It was for Jesus,

It is for us.

If you're ashamed to be associated with Jesus,

You're worried about what other people will think of you and how they'll see you if they know you're a Christian,

Jesus says,

Here's the spiritual reality.

If you live only for this life,

If all you are concerned about is the esteem of human beings,

You put yourself in danger of losing your life,

Your true and lasting life with God,

Your soul.

What if you had all the praise and honour from all the people in the whole world,

But in the process,

You forfeited your soul?

Would that be a good deal?

Is that a good investment?

Of course not.

Jesus is bringing true life and salvation for those who follow him on this path,

So,
Even though the path can be difficult,

don't be ashamed, he says.

It's more than worth it.

And then he ends on that strong note of dire warning,

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.'

There's the human community,

Then there's the heavenly community, God and his angels,

Jesus points us to that heavenly community as the one in which we should seek ultimate honour,

Even if it means missing out on honour in this life.

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GOD'S SOLUTION

But before we finish,
We also need to consider how all this plays out in the Gospel?

On the one hand Jesus warning against being ashamed of him relates back to what's just happened with Peter,

But from another perspective,

His words are prophetic,

Because on the night before Jesus died,

Peter would become so ashamed,
That he would say to a servant girl.

'I tell you, I don't know the man'.

And that's us isn't it?

Weak in faith,

Succumbing to temptation,

Ashamed of Jesus and his words.

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But the good news,

Is that Jesus still went to the cross for Peter,
And for each and every one of you.

Listen to how the book of Hebrews reflects on this.

We are encouraged there to,

*'...look to Jesus,
The founder and perfecter of our faith,
Who for the joy set before him endured the cross,
Despising it's shame,
And is seated at the right hand of God.'*

Elsewhere in Hebrews we are told that Jesus *'is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters'*,

And even that God *'is not ashamed to be our God'*.

Jesus suffered,
Jesus was rejected,

Jesus died and rose again,

All for you,

To cover your shame,

And clothe you in his righteousness.

And that's why,
although Peter was ashamed of Jesus,

That's not the last word,

Repentance and restoration is always possible,

And if you've succumb to that temptation to be ashamed of Jesus,

It doesn't mean that's the last word,

Repent and be forgiven!

Jesus hasn't given up on you!

When you hear Peter preaching in the book of Acts,

You see how Christ has not only forgiven and restored him,

But transformed him.

Now He's not ashamed to preach the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus,
for our salvation, boldly to whoever will listen.

By then he could say with his colleague St Paul,

*'I am not ashamed of the Gospel, '
For it is the power of salvation to all who believe'.*

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CONCLUSION

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Don't be ashamed of Jesus and his words,

Don't be ashamed of his cross,

Don't be ashamed the cross he calls us to take up as his followers.

For it is the path that leads to life,

To the glory of the Father.

God grant it to us for Jesus' sake, Amen.