

Written Copy: Mark 8:35-38 "Will Jesus Be Ashamed of Me?"

2nd Sunday in Lent

Sunday, February 28th, 2021

Text: Mark 8:35-38

³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

The text's intent

This text combines the confession of who Jesus is with the clear teaching of what the Christ has come to fulfill according to the Father's will. It shows how mankind desires a Savior that will bring temporal success and that desire stands in direct opposition to the Father's will and plan for the Son. It stands so opposed that it is in league with Satan's work to prevent His Church from being saved. Jesus then describes the life of a follower as one who keeps denying his own will and submitting to whatever weight and suffering comes by confessing Christ and His Gospel through word and deed. Failing to live as a confessor of Christ is to gain life in this world yet lose the eternal life to come. No matter how advantageous it might be to do this, one can never gain enough to be worth the loss of eternal life. On the Last Day when Christ returns those who were ashamed to confess faith in Christ due to persecution from the world will find Christ ashamed to confess them as one worthy of the eternal kingdom. But those who are not ashamed to confess Jesus will see Jesus confess them as children of the Heavenly Father and welcomed into eternal life.

Focus Statement:

Jesus came to be the Savior who clears the evidence table in God's courtroom of all the sinful exhibits that would cause Him to be too ashamed of me to be given eternal life. He made them exhibits in His own trial where He took my place, my sin, and my punishment. So that I stand acquitted before the Father, with nothing to shame me, and will be welcomed into eternal life

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Would Jesus ever be ashamed of me on the Last Day? Throughout my earthly life of being His Disciple I act ashamed of Him and His Gospel as I refuse to live as a witness to it in thought, word, and deed. I want Him to be the Jesus that forgives me so that I can please myself, not the one who tells me "Go and sin no more." I earn for myself His designation of eternal shame.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Through the Spirit's work of repentance I remain one with no shame, even as I continue to sin and disobey. And He works with me so that my life becomes more of a living witness to my faith in Christ, so that I need not be ashamed to be called a Christian.

Subject Sentence: Live Shamelessly Forgiven in Christ

Introduction: Being Ashamed to be Someone's Friend

Have you ever been ashamed to be in the company of someone else in public? I hate to ask this question for fear some of you will answer: "Yeah, that Pastor Mark guy!"

There was a friend back when I was much younger that I liked to hang out with. He had a great sense of humor, often sarcastic, that appealed to my own sense of humor. The problem for me was he would become obnoxious in the public setting. This obnoxiousness was usually fueled by alcohol. We used to go to concerts together. We would be having a good time until he thought it would be the height of hilarity to start talking about someone else, how they dressed or how they looked, and do so a little too loud. Sometimes loud enough that the subject of his ridicule could hear him. We would go to baseball games and he would start heckling the umpires, or deriding batters that struck out in key situations. Now I like to just sit and enjoy the game. I'll stand up and cheer when someone hits a home run for my team, but I'm really not comfortable booing when the opposing team hit a home run. That's bad enough in itself. But when he started making it personal, talking in a derogatory manner about the player by name, and using colorful metaphors that are not appropriate in any public setting, that to me was over the top. I tried talking to him, asking him to cool it. He usually responded with some colorful metaphors aimed at me. Hanging out with him in public was embarrassing for me. I found myself ashamed to be with him, so I stopped going places with him. That quickly resulted in an end to our friendship.

Now perhaps you have had such friends in your life. Maybe they were even family members. Perhaps this may have been you a time or two. Have you ever given thought to the possibility that people would feel the same way about you? That there might be friends or acquaintances of yours that feel embarrassed to be in your presence, ashamed to be hanging around with you? It's one thing when that embarrassment is the result of bad manners or inappropriate behavior. But what about when others are embarrassed because of what you believe and confess? Take that one step further, could there ever be a reason that Jesus would be ashamed of you?

Why Would Jesus Be Ashamed of Me?

These are things I pondered as I focused on our Gospel Reading, particularly **Mark 8:38** **For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.**" This day that Jesus refers to when He comes in the Father's glory with all the holy angels is none other than the Last Day, Judgement Day. It is a sobering thought for any Christian that on that day Jesus would proclaim that He is ashamed of you. And since its that Last Day, there is no more time to change His mind about His feelings toward you. There is no chance to redeem yourself. For Him to be ashamed of you means you will spend the rest of eternity apart from Him, a very sobering thought.

Why on earth might Jesus be ashamed of me? Let's look at the context of this verse as we ponder this. It begins with Peter's good confession of who Jesus' really is. Following this we have Jesus giving His Disciples a frank, serious discourse on what it meant for Him to be the Christ. It meant that He must go to Jerusalem, and there at the hands of the Jewish Ruling Council which included the Elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, be questioned and condemned, followed by being tortured and killed. But then three days later rise from death. We have Peter taking Jesus aside and admonishing Him because He had the scenario of what's supposed to happen when He arrives at Jerusalem all wrong. In Peter's mind, as well as the rest of His Disciples, and most of those others who had been following Him, they had a much different scenario. He was supposed to raise up from the ashes the Kingdom of Israel in all the glory that it had under King David. This meant of course riding out on a rail the much-hated Romans. To Peter and the Disciples this sounded great. To Jesus it sounded like the plan of Satan. It stood in direct opposition to what He had been telling them must happen, which was the will and plan of God Himself.

Mark 8:33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "**Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.**" He is saying this to Peter, yet in front of the other Disciples who were thinking the same thing Peter was. Stop doing the work of Satan, which is trying to lead me into violating the Father's will. Get back behind me and follow me as I show you the Father's will in my words and actions.

Mark 8:34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**" He is not just talking to the 12 Disciples, but the crowd that had been following Him, some of whom desired to be disciple followers of Him. They, like Peter, need to get in line behind Him too. He's telling them that whatever false notions they hold about who He is or why He came, whether it's to be a temporal king, or a miracle healer, or a magic bread provider, they need to deny these sinful ideas. He has not come to be the Messiah they desire. He has not come to create for them a bounteous kingdom on this earth and free them from all earthly struggles and problems. In fact, following Him will likely mean more struggles and problems. It will mean picking up their cross and following Him.

Now up to this point Jesus has not told them that His death would come on the cross. So, what would this mean to the hearers? At that time it meant the worst kind of suffering and death. It meant capital punishment reserved for criminals. In the culture of that time, to avoid picking up one's cross seemed to mean seeking to avoid the consequences of punishment for breaking the law, and even the consequences that would come from making bad decisions. So when Jesus told them following Him meant picking up and carrying such a cross, He was referring to whatever consequences might be imposed upon a believer because they chose to follow Him.

This concept of what it meant to pick up one's cross is born out in the following verses **Mark 8:35-37** ³⁵ **For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life**

for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? A Disciple of Jesus, which in our day means a believer in Jesus, or a Christian for shorthand, must be willing to give up his life in this world. He or she must deny all the ways they cling to the life our unbelieving culture is enamored with, give up all the ways we might try to live like them. This includes all the times we act like Christians on Sunday, then look, talk, and act more like the world Monday through Saturday. It's all the ways we put Jesus on the backburner according to our day planner, how we spend our time, talents, and treasures first and foremost upon ourselves, and then give Jesus whatever is left over. How we vote for leaders and support policies that serve to benefit us at the expense of those who cannot speak for themselves such as the unborn.

Following as a Disciple of the world will profit you nothing. All the world's riches are not enough to buy back the wonderful gift you forfeit when, with your thoughts, words, and actions, you turn away from following Christ out of embarrassment for what He teaches, and dissatisfaction over what He demands. But those who lose their lives for the sake of following Christ and for His Gospel message will save the gift of eternal life! But how on earth can we do that? We can't. Has this message so far brought discomfort to your heart and mind? Has it brought embarrassment for the ways you have failed to stand with Your Lord and Savior? Good! Not because I love seeing you suffer, but because it means your Baptism is still working as needed!

How Jesus Took Your Shame

What you and I could never do on our own, Jesus has done for you. Paul describes it in **Romans 5:8-10 ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.** While we were still acting as enemies of God, wanting Jesus to be the Savior who came to provide us with the good life now and let us do as we please, while we were thinking, speaking, and acting in ways that brought shame upon Jesus because we call ourselves Christians, for people like you and me, Christ came and died.

We have been justified by His blood. Justified is a courtroom term. So, imagine an evidence table lined with all the ways we cause God to be ashamed of us. A table filled with all the ways we have disobeyed Him in thought, word, and deed. All these things point to a guilty verdict, of which the sentence is eternal separation from God. But Jesus steps in. On each of those sinful exhibits he crosses out your name and writes His own. These now become His crimes and His sins. And He willingly takes the punishment which meant the shedding of His own blood, His suffering and death on the cross. Now you stand there with no evidence pointing to your guilt. You are now acquitted. You go free. You have been freed from the wrath of God now and for eternity.

How can we be assured that on the Last Day Jesus will not be ashamed of us, considering all we continue daily to think, say, and do things that should cause Him to be ashamed? **Mark 8:35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.** When we lose our sinful life for the sake of the Gospel, we save our life eternally. And how does that happen? As the gift we receive in our baptism! **Romans 6:3-4** ³ **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** ⁴ **We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.** You lost your life in the world when, in Baptism, you were forever linked to Christ's death and resurrection. You died to your old life of sin, that life that would cause Jesus to be ashamed of you on the Last Day. And in your Baptism you have risen to a new life in Christ. This happened not just once when you were baptized but happens over and over every time you confess your sins and repent. It happens as the Holy Spirit works in your heart and mind to create sorrow over your sins, and then turn you in faith to trust in your Savior, and the cleansing you have as His promise in the Gospel. Whenever you confess your sin, you continue to lose your life lived in love of the world, and you are reborn to life of love to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You are born again to a life of serving Him in love. You are born again to a life of picking up your cross and following Him.

Living an Unashamedly Christian Life

We begin to live an unashamedly Christian life through constant examination of ourselves, confessing of the shamefulness we find there, and repenting. The Holy Spirit who creates and sustains repentant faith moves us to change when we hold fast to the forgiveness we have free of charge, and then moves us through that grace to start over with the desire to live as unashamed followers of Jesus. Through the Spirit's work we learn to live in the world but not of the world. We learn to lovingly stand against those things that stand opposed to what Christ taught. Living this way is not easy, that's because it involves cross carrying on our part.

One example that came to mind in my life recently was an article in the February edition of the Lutheran Witness. It talked about some of the many Executive Orders President Biden has signed since He took office. Many of them we would have no issues with as Christians following Jesus. But one of them does. The Lutheran Witness states "***The Mexico City Policy, which denied U.S. funds to international organizations that provide abortion services, came into being under President Ronald Reagan in 1985. Under the policy, foreign non-governmental organizations that received American taxpayer funding had to certify that they did not "perform or actively promote abortions as a method of family planning."*** The Executive order signed by President Biden which was given "***the disingenuous title "Memorandum on Protecting Women's Health at Home and Abroad," states that the policy "made it harder for women to obtain necessary healthcare." The order does nothing to protect women's health. Abortion is not health care, not for the women seeking abortions, and certainly not for the children in their wombs..."***"

I know that some of you whole heartedly support President Biden, while others may not, as is evidenced by some of your Facebook Posts. I fully realize that for some of you, this is going to wrinkle some feathers, and cause you to become very defensive. For others you will see this as fodder for your own personal "I hate President Biden Campaign". Both of these outcomes are NOT denying yourself, picking up your cross, and following Jesus. Both of them are setting down your cross and following a particular political party or person. But its hard to see it this way because our emotions get involved. As Christians we are called to support our elected leaders in all that they do that is for the good of our country, especially those we as Christians are called to care for, such as the poor, the single parent families, and the children. But when our leaders act in ways that stand against what Scripture teaches, when they pass orders that allow and encourage the murder of unborn babies, we are called to speak out opposition. At the same time, we are called to support our President in all the good things he does and remain obedient to those laws and commands that do not violate Scripture. Living this way, you may draw the anger of those who have taken up passionate positions on either side of the fence. Welcome picking up your cross. Welcome to denying a life lived in conformity to the goals and values of the world and instead living the life of a follower of Jesus.

Conclusion

Because I was constantly ashamed to be in public with my friend, we parted ways. Yet I know there have been times in my life when I have been the obnoxious one that others have been embarrassed to be with. And no matter how hard I try, I daily do things that would cause Jesus to be ashamed of me, things that I think, say and do, as well as those things that I fail to say and do. I deserve to receive the present and eternal punishment referenced in our Gospel Lesson. But that's not what I will receive. It's not what you will receive. It was necessary that Jesus go to Jerusalem to suffer and die so that He could remove from your life and mine all that would shame us in His eyes on the Last Day. Throughout your life in this world you will be tempted to live like the world. You will fall short of the perfect ideal that would earn for yourself eternal life. But Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection takes all your shame away. In your baptism you are given a new life, reborn each day. May the Holy Spirit given you and me through our Baptisms the willingness to pick up our cross and follow our Savior. May He inspire us to live our lives as a witness to Him. And when we fail, may His love, forgiveness and salvation flow to us in abundance. Amen.