

“Jesus, the Christ”

And Jesus went on with His disciples to the villages ... He comes to Eagle, asking you, His disciples – “Who do people say that I am?”

And the disciples answered, saying – well, some people think that you’re nothing more than a figment of the Church’s imagination, a make-believe superhero type for naïve, simple, backward people.

Others say that you are a great teacher – right up there with Confucius, Einstein, Oprah Winfrey and the best YouTube influencers around – someone to be listened to and followed, someone to pattern our lives after – but just one mentor amongst many.

And then Jesus asked His gathered disciples – “But who do you say that I am?” And one of them (known for stepping forward and saying what is on everyone else’s mind), said – “You are the Christ.”

Very good! So, Jesus continues the preaching and the teaching. With an intense catechesis Jesus “began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

He doesn’t pull any punches – He said this freely, and frankly. No highly technical language, no parables or mysterious words – just the facts – plain, straightforward. And the sense here is that Jesus doesn’t just say it once – “He began to teach them” these things – and taught them again and again, drilling it home so there would be no mistake about what He has said.

They all heard what He said, and it’s got them squirming in their seats – but one of them (the one who openly confessed Him to be “the Christ”) – came up and put His arm around Jesus, and took Him aside, and began to rebuke Him.

Peter, no doubt, knew what is said about the Son of Man in the Book of Daniel – that His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom that would not be destroyed – and so what Jesus had been teaching them, just didn’t mesh with what Peter believes that the Scriptures teach.

He takes Jesus aside and says (in essence) – No, that’s not the way it’s supposed to be – you need to stop talking like that. The Lord has big plans for you. You’re not going to be rejected – you’re going to be a big hit. We’ve already caught a glimpse of it with the crowd’s reaction to your miracles.

Look, Jesus, the crowds are flocking to you. The religious authorities may not like you – but you’ve got the people on your side – and a grass-roots movement can take you a long way. With that groundswell of support – you’ll be the “go-to-guy” for all of Israel.

Imagine what it will be like with you at the helm. Finally, we can break free of the yoke of the Romans – we can be independent again, a return to the glory days – we can once again be a player on the world’s stage.

As a matter of fact, the other disciples and I have been talking about what life is going to be like in your kingdom – so, all this talk about rejection and death has got to stop – and let’s get on with the grandeur of your kingdom.

But turning, and looking out over the whole congregation, Jesus 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.”

Those are pretty harsh words our Lord speaks to His disciple, Peter. They are harsh, but loving words – spoken to all who want Jesus to be their own kind of Christ – calling Satanic all who look for a Christ who will not be rejected and die.

Harsh, loving, truthful, and necessary words – for Jesus says that IT IS NECESSARY for the Son of Man to “suffer ... and be rejected ... be killed, and after three days rise again.”

You, like Peter – eagerly step forward to confess Jesus to be “the Christ” – but then you take Him aside and begin to tell Him how it’s going to be in your own life.

He tells you to live in faith toward God and in fervent love toward one another – and you trust in yourself, and love and serve yourself.

He tells you to repent – and you say the words – but think to yourself, “I’m not really all that bad.” You deceive yourself into thinking that you have not hurt anyone by your words and deeds. You think that, in comparison, you’re a lot better than most people.

He tells you that He must be rejected – and you’d rather not listen to that kind of talk. I mean, who wants to follow a loser, someone the world despises? You know, Jesus, if you’d loosen up a bit and not be such a stickler for the truths of Holy Scripture, we’d both get along much better. If you were a bit more flexible – especially when it comes to things like people living together before marriage, and letting anyone come to the Lord’s Supper – you’d get a much better reception, you might not be rejected.

He tells you that He must suffer and be killed – and all that does is remind you of how wicked and destructive your sin really is – and drives home the point that you need someone to die for you, and not just someone, but God’s own Son.

But that’s what it means for Jesus to be “the Christ.” He is “the Anointed One” – appointed by God to be the sacrifice for the sin of the world – to die for your sin. Without that death, without that Christ – there is no forgiveness, no life, no salvation – for you, or for anyone.

And that’s why He keeps catechizing you in this truth – for He desires that you would be saved. He knows how your mind works – how your way of thinking can lead you astray, and so it needs to be put to death – so that you are not ashamed of His words, His teachings, ashamed of His suffering and dying for you – so that you do not forfeit your soul.

Beloved disciples of Jesus “the Christ” – Jesus suffered, was rejected and killed for your salvation. And on the third day He was raised to life – thereby showing you that “the Christ” has taken away your sin and death. By that forgiveness, Jesus raises you from death to a new and everlasting life.

“Who do you say that I am?” Denying yourself and your way of thinking, in humble faith, you rejoice to confess – “you are the Christ” – you are my salvation – you are my life, now and forevermore. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.