

Introduction

1. Do you have trouble remembering people's names?
 - a. Remembering names is difficult for most of us, and it seems to get harder with age.
 - b. When I first meet a new person, I try to associate something about the person with his/her name.
 - c. Maybe Mr. Long is tall, or Ms. Cash is a banker.
 - d. Properly identifying a person's name can be accomplished by relating what we see in them or by what they do.
2. In today's passage, Peter, for the first time, properly identified Jesus by the title Messiah through spiritual eyes and ears opened by God to see what Jesus did and to hear what Jesus said.
3. **Read Mk 8:27-30.**

A. The Question (27-28)

1. In last week's passage (i.e., Mk 8:22-26), Jesus and His disciples had landed in the region of Bethsaida on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus had healed a blind man in two stages.
2. Jesus and His disciples then travelled north from Bethsaida about twenty-five miles ". . . to the villages around Caesarea Philippi" (27).
3. Daniel Akin notes, "Jesus takes the Twelve north for a time of private instruction. Caesarea Philippi is an unlikely location for the first human proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah. It represents the outer regions of paganism, idolatry, and hostility to the Hebrew faith. We are at a crucial turning point. As Jesus brought gradual physical sight to the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26), He will now bring gradual spiritual sight to the disciples concerning who He is and what kind of Messiah He will be" (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 172).
4. As they travelled, Jesus privately tested the spiritual eyesight of His disciples with a penetrating question: "Who do people say I am?" (27)
 - a. James Brooks notes, "In rabbinic circles the students usually asked the questions, and the teacher provided the answers. That Jesus here asked the question is just one of many indications that he was not a typical rabbi" (James Brooks, *Mark*, 134).
 - b. This question, now openly asked by Jesus, had been asked in the hearts and minds of those who had encountered Jesus since the beginning of His ministry.
 - 1) The people had wondered about who He was from the beginning of His teaching in Capernaum (cf., Mk 2:21-22,27-28).
 - 2) The Pharisees had wondered and had even sent a delegation from Jerusalem to investigate and question Jesus (cf., Mk 2:18ff, 2:24ff 3:1ff, 7:1ff, 8:11). They concluded that "'He is possessed by Beelzebul!'" (Mk 4:22)
 - 3) King Herod wondered about who Jesus was and concluded that he was "John, whom I beheaded . . . raised from the dead!" (Mk 6:16)
 - 4) Even the disciples had asked this question among themselves after the calming of the storm as they asked one another, ". . . 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'" (Mk 4:41)
 - c. The disciples answered Jesus with a summary of the various answers that others had given.
 - 1) "John the Baptist" – This was the opinion of King Herod who had beheaded John the Baptist (cf., Mk 6:14-29) and feared that Jesus might be John the Baptist "raised from the dead" (Mk 6:14).
 - 2) "Elijah" – The Jews believed that the Prophet Elijah would come again before the great Day of the Lord as prophesied by Malachi—"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction" (Mal 4:5-6).
 - 3) "one of the prophets" – The people knew that Jesus spoke and acted with authority (cf., Mk 1:27, 2:12), but they weren't clear on exactly who He was. Perhaps He was another prophet sent by God after four centuries of prophetic silence. He seemed important, but they didn't clearly know who He was.

B. The Confession (29-30)

1. Jesus then personalized the question for His disciples: “Who do you say I am?” (29)
2. Peter bravely and correctly answered, “You are the Messiah.”
 - a. Matthew gives a fuller account of Peter’s answer and Jesus’ follow-up response in his account: “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven’” (Mt 6:16-17).
 - b. The title Messiah comes from the Hebrew word *Mashiah*, which means “anointed one.”
 - 1) This title appears in the Old Testament in reference to one who was appointed or sent from God with a special purpose or task.
 - 2) Ultimately, the Jews looked for a great and final Messiah, who would be sent by God to vindicate His people and judge the earth on the great and dreadful Day of the Lord.
 - c. Peter got it right. He had discerned the spiritual truth of who Jesus was. He had looked beyond the physical and seen the true spiritual nature and origin of the one whom he called Master.
 - d. Did Peter and the other disciples fully understand what Peter had just confessed?
 - 1) I don’t believe that they did. Peter and the other disciples knew that Jesus had been sent by God with an important message and for a special purpose. Yet, they did not fully understand Jesus’ God-given purpose or how that purpose would be fulfilled.
 - 2) The spiritually blind eyes of Peter and the other disciples were opening, but they were still not seeing everything clearly.
 - 3) Their spiritual eyesight was now like the physical eyesight of the blind man after the first stage of healing in last week’s passage. They saw spiritual truths moving about like trees.
 - 4) The Master would continue to touch their spiritually blind eyes with His teaching in preparation for the culmination of His ministry as Messiah in Jerusalem.
3. This Caesarean Confession by Peter is considered by many scholars to be the climax or highpoint of the Gospel of Mark.
 - a. After this critical and correct identification of Jesus, everything else in this gospel is falling action leading to Jesus’ passion and resurrection.
 - b. From this first identification by Peter, Jesus begins to teach His disciples about what is to come with His passion (cf., Mk 8:31, 9:31, 10:32-34).
 - c. The Messianic Secret would be revealed to the disciples throughout the rest of this section of Mark (i.e., Mk 8:22-10:52), and it will be revealed for all the world to see in the passion narrative of Mk 11:1-16:8.
 - d. However, for now “Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him” (30).
 - e. James Brooks adds a good insight about Jesus’ command for silence regarding the disciples’ identification of Him as the Messiah. He writes, “No doubt Peter had a typical Jewish understanding of a military conqueror who would free the Jews from foreign domination. There is no evidence that any Jew in pre-Christian times thought in terms of a suffering Messiah. The confession, although correct, was also inadequate. For this reason, Mark did not indicate that Jesus either accepted or rejected it (cf., Matt 16:17-19). The confession resembles the first, incomplete phase of the previous healing. . . . Understanding why Jesus would command silence about a healing or exorcism is relatively easy, but why he would attempt to prevent further confession of his identity is relatively difficult. The answer has to do both with the popular misconception of the nature and role of the Messiah and with the insufficiency of identifying Jesus only as the Messiah. The verb translated ‘warned’ ordinarily means to rebuke (previously in 1:25; 3:12; 4:39 and in vv. 32-33 following, although the first two are obscured in the NIV). The association of this term with demons and Satan (1:25; 3:12; 8:33) suggests that the popular conception of messiahship is not only inadequate but erroneous” (Brooks, 135)
4. The first stage of healing the spiritual blindness of the disciples had occurred. But there are yet many touches of the Master’s hands and more teaching yet to be done before the disciples would see clearly just who Jesus is and what that meant for both Him and themselves.
5. In next week’s study passage (i.e., Mk 8:31-33), Jesus helps the disciples to see the kind of Messiah He came to be—a suffering and dying Messiah.

C. Reflections

1. Who is Jesus to you?
2. Who do you say Jesus is with your words and actions each day?
3. Confessing Jesus as Messiah with your words must be followed by confessing Him as Messiah with the living of your life.
4. Now is not the time to keep the truth about Jesus a secret. In fact, we are commanded by Jesus to make the truth about Him known to all people on earth (cf., Mt 28:18-20).
5. Share the good news that Jesus is the Messiah with others today using both your words and actions.