

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Mark 8:27-38

Year B - Lent 2, Text: Mark 8:27-38

Year B - Lent 2, Text: Mark 8:31-38 (or Mark 9:2-9)

Some geography is in order to understand the progression of stories in Mark's Gospel.

Mark 1:14 – 7:23 describes Jesus' ministry in Galilee. However, in Mark 5:1-20 Jesus works in the region to the east of the Sea of Galilee (note the reference to Gerasenes and the Decapolis in Mark 5:1-20). Jesus heals the daughter of a woman living in Syrophenicia (7:24-30).

Next, Jesus travels through the region of Tyre and Sidon to the Decapolis (7:31-8:11). Jesus then moves north to Caesarea Philippi, and along the way He heals a man in two stages in the vicinity of Bethsaida (8:22-26).

Verses 8:27-28: As they reach Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks the disciples who the people think He is, and who they, the disciples, think He is. Although the people do not see Jesus to be the Messiah, it appears that the disciples do.

Verses 8:29-30: Peter answers for them all, "You are the Messiah!" But do they really understand? While Peter understands who Jesus is, he does not understand Jesus' Messianic role. Why not?

Verses 8:31-32: After Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus (for the first time in Mark) predicts His approaching suffering, death, burial, and resurrection (8:31). Jesus' words are too much for Peter. He rebukes Jesus!

Verses 8:33-38: Jesus responds by telling Peter that he is on the side of Satan (8:33). Jesus goes on to explain to the disciples that if they wish to be involved with Him, they are called to follow Him as that Servant-King who denies Himself to spend the whole of life in selfless service of others. To belong to Jesus means seeking to use life as Jesus did, no matter what the cost.

Comments on Jesus' Passion Predictions:

In today's story, Jesus predicts his approaching passion for the first time (8:27-38). Jesus then heads south and predicts it for a second time while on the way to Capernaum (9:30-35). In 10:1, Jesus leaves Galilee, sets out for Jerusalem, and along the way predicts it for a third time (10:32-45).

The disciples find Jesus' remarks about His coming passion difficult to understand. They, like others in Israel, are looking for a Messiah who will free them from foreign oppressors and give them continuing material prosperity. Their concern is, what benefits are in it for them? Jesus' call to the servant life falls on confused, disbelieving ears. Jesus continues by telling them that they will soon see the most powerful demonstration of God's Kingdom — when Jesus is nailed to a cross (9:1).

When Jesus predicts His approaching passion a second time (Mark 9:30-32) the disciples are still confused. They argue about who will be the greatest in the new order that Jesus is about to establish (9:33-34; e.g., who will be your Vice-President, your Secretary of State?). Once again, Jesus points out that anyone wanting to be great in His Kingdom must seek greatness opposite from the way the world seeks it — by devoting life to the service of others (9:35).

After Jesus leaves Galilee and sets out for Jerusalem (10:1), He predicts His passion for the third time (10:32-34). The disciples' response shows that they have still learned nothing (10:35-37). Their concern has to do with which of them will be assigned the place of honor in Jesus' coming coronation ceremony in Jerusalem. Jesus responds by pointing out the difference between the way the world measures greatness and the way He measures greatness (10:42-45). Has the confusion displayed by the disciples cleared up in today's church?

