



HEADING TOWARD JERUSALEM

Sept. 16, 2018 Mark 8: 27-38 & Is. 50: 5-9a

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [Receptors of Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Right Answer Alone is Not Enough](#)

[New Melleray Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Sr. Gail at Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey writes: "Jesus knew the hearts of the people around him. Their thoughts were good, even holy, but they were all wrong. Their thoughts about God were too limited, too human. When Jesus began to teach them the truth—that he must suffer and die and be raised on the third day—we know what happened. Peter couldn't let go of *his* idea of the Messiah. According to Mark, Peter began to "rebuke" Jesus, and Jesus had to reprimand him in no uncertain terms: "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mark 8:33)." As we listen to this text do a heart check and see what your idea of the Messiah is like. Does this help us understand Peter's reaction?

Fitzpatrick, Mother Gail, OCSO. [Seasons of Grace: Wisdom from the Cloister](#). Chicago. ACTA Pub. 2000. Pg. 25.

Mark 8: 27-35-38

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around **Caesarea Philippi**. On the way he asked his disciples this **question**, "Who do

people say I am?" 28 They replied, "Some say **John the Baptist**; others say **Elijah**; and still others, one of the **prophets**." 29 And you, he when on to ask, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the **Messiah**." 30 Then he **strictly ordered** them not to tell anyone about him. 31 He then began to teach them that the **Son of Man** must **suffer** much, be **rejected** by the **elders**, **chief priests** and the **scribes**, be put to death, and rise **three days** later. 32 He said this quite **openly**. Peter then took him aside and began to **remonstrates** with him. 33 At this he turned around and, eyeing the disciples, **reprimanded** Peter in turn: "Get out of my sight you **satan!**". You are not judging by **God's standards**, but by **man's!**" 34 He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them: "If anyone could **come after** me, they must **deny** themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will **lose** it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the **gospel** will save it."

(Revised Common Lectionary adds)

36 What good is it for someone to **gain** the whole **world**, yet **forfeit** their **soul**? 37 Or what can anyone give in **exchange** for their **soul**? 38 If anyone is **ashamed** of me and my words in this **adulterous** and **sinful** generation, the **Son of Man** will be **ashamed** of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus is checking the disciples understanding of whom people say that he is. Has my answer to this question grown in the past few years of living the gospel message?

PRAYER: Lord, you often speak words that challenge my understanding of what makes sense just as Peter does in this story. Of course Peter didn't want you to die. What would happen to everyone's hopes for you if that happened? And what would that mean for me as well? I am beginning to see all the ways that I too judge by my own standards instead of God's. Help me, as I take this awareness into my daily life and try to take up my cross and follow you. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

CAESAREA PHILIPPI: (See supportive information) The miracles and teachings have been so exciting and powerful. This beautiful location made the statements of Jesus stand out even more for their stark demands. It would be like going to a choice tourist resort, and then having to face losing everything.

Imagine the most beautiful place you have ever been on vacation. Just when you thought everything was perfect, you are presented a challenge similar to the one Jesus gives the disciples and the crowd. What do you think might be going on inside of you now?

QUESTION: A question can be a source of information or of challenge. Jesus starts out his questioning with the safe one "What are people saying" and becomes challenging when he switches to "What do you say?"

When you are asked a challenging question, what is your first "gut level" reaction? How do you feel when someone gently leads you into a deeper consciousness by his or her use of questions? Compare this to the confrontation style of questioning.

JOHN THE BAPTIST: John was seen as the one who would precede the Messiah. He has been killed by Herod, as he was too dangerous to have around. Herod thinks Jesus is John reincarnated, and therefore, even more dangerous.

When the disciples say that people think Jesus is John reincarnated, what implication might this have? What would that tell Jesus about where the people/disciples were at in their understanding of what was going on?

ELIJAH: Two realities are important for the Jewish faith history, the law and the prophets. Elijah represents the prophets. He was one of the figures that met God on a mountain and disappeared instead of dying.

If the people/disciples thought Jesus was Elijah, what would that tell Jesus about their level of understanding?

PROPHETS: Once the people had solidified their belief system in the temple and its rituals, prophecy seems to disappear. People settled into thinking that all that needed to be known was already known.

What implications would a prophet have for your understanding of this text?

MESSIAH: Messiah means the anointed one. The one promised by God to save the people. The Samaritans thought the Messiah was the one to bring all truth, the Jews thought the Messiah would lead them out of servitude to Rome and to autonomy, the Qumran community thought there would be two Messiahs, one to take care of religious concerns and another to take care of political issues. Jesus is trying to figure out which idea the people/disciples had.

How is Jesus helping the disciples sort out of these understandings with his question?

STRICTLY ORDERED: This is strong language. It is as if Jesus raises his voice, and with a stern look tells the disciples "Don't you dare talk like that about me!"

Have you ever had someone tell you something like this? Did you have a confused reaction?

SON OF MAN: One of the first heresies was the denial of Jesus' humanity. Mark is dealing with this problem, and Jesus himself fought against people making him a sort of divine man. Pagan religions were full of examples of divine humans; Plato and Caesar, are but two examples. It was thought that the gods begot such beings with human mothers. Even as far back as Genesis 6:1f, there is mention of this idea, so Jesus is consistent in denying that idea.

In what ways do we wish Jesus would conform to our understanding of what we need in a Messiah? Do we also want a divine man instead of the son of man?

SUFFER: We all know what it is to suffer. It is more than just physical pain. It is emotional and spiritual pain as well.

Jesus says he would have to suffer? What would that do to the disciples' idea of Messiah?

REJECTED: Already in the hearts of the people and disciples there is rejection of Jesus' self-understanding. This will come into fullness when they shout, "Crucify him!" later on.

Have you ever sensed a rejection coming because someone wanted you to be something you could not be? What did that do to your relationship? What do you think it did then for Jesus, for the disciples/crowd?

ELDERS: The elders were heads of families or clans. They represented their people in political and religious matters.

Who are the elders of today? If you saw them rejecting someone you are attracted to, what effect would that have on you? What effect did that have on the people with Jesus that day?

CHIEF PRIESTS: In the time of Jesus the head of each priestly family held the title of chief priest. These chief priests were under the high priest of the temple.

If you saw the chief priests rejecting Jesus, what effect would that have on you? Would this give you an escape route from guilt if you also rejected Jesus? If so why? If not why? Who are the chief priests of today?

SCRIBES: Scribes were people who were educated in interpreting the laws. It was their duty to teach and protect the truth as the law prescribed.

If the teachers and interpreters of the law said Jesus was in error, what effect could that have on the people? Who are the "scribes" today for you?

RISE: We are so comfortable, at least intellectually with the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, that we tend to forget that there was no precedent for this reality in the time of Jesus. Just imagine the puzzled looks on the faces of the disciples as they looked at each other and wondered what he meant. No one had ever come back from the dead.

What do you think the people made of Jesus' talk about rising from the dead? Would you have any better luck explaining it now, even with the hindsight of the Resurrection?

THREE DAYS: Three meant completeness. A person had to be dead three days before they were considered "dead, dead". Otherwise it was common to make a mistake and find a person still alive.

What did Jesus want the people to know when he talked about rising after three days? What form of self-understanding have we accepted from others that need to die before we can be truly free?

OPENLY: Jesus was up front about everything. He held nothing back. Sometimes, when we are not ready to hear something, we can block it out and not even remember having heard it at all.

The disciples and the crowd blocked out the meaning of what Jesus was saying. Do you think the religious authorities did so as well? What made some of them able to hear Jesus and others not able?

REMONSTRATE: means to protest, to reject, to present strong reasons against something. Peter was reacting strongly against Jesus' self-understanding.

Why do you think Peter reacted so strongly? Do you think you would have reacted in the same way as Peter? If not, why? If so, why?

REPRIMANDED: means a strong formal rebuke by a person in authority. Try to imagine Peter's feelings as Jesus puts him in his place. The others probably were nodding in assent as Peter made his plea to Jesus. Their heads must have suffered from a form of whiplash from being jerked around so badly.

How does a reprimand help to clear your head and heart?

SATAN: Satan, historically has been the one who keeps God honest as in the book of Job. Down through scriptural history the role and understanding of that which comes to be known as Satan undergoes significant development. At first it was more of an energy source, the source of entropy that possessed the power to drag God's creative process back into the unformed chaos. Eventually that power becomes personalized and is given a name that begins with a capital S rather than a small s. It is useful to see the Satan role as a personification of all the energy that comes together to make us choose out of fear instead out of love.

Peter must have been severely wounded by Jesus calling him a Satan. But this temptation to accept the people's idea of Messiah must have been the same as the testing in the desert. Examine the ways that we learn by experience when we have that "I have been here before feeling." What "Satan's do you know because you have met them before?

GOD'S STANDARDS: God seems to have built into creation certain standards such as Ten Commandments.

Can you articulate what God's standards are in today's language? How can we discern between God's ways and humanity's ways?

MAN'S: Space and time limit humanity. God is not limited like we are.

How do you discern what is of God [not limited by space/time] and what is of human origin [limited by space/time].

COME AFTER / FOLLOW: To come after calls us to follow, to imitate.

What is Jesus asking the disciples/crowd to do? What are you being asked to do?

DENY: To deny means to contradict, or refuse something to be true.

Jesus was asking people to go against the common sense of their day. How are you asked to do the same?

CROSS: A cross is where two things intersect. Jesus was to be the one to bring God and humanity together. He had everyday images of this reality as he passed people on crosses along the roads of Jerusalem.

What are the crosses of today? Who is hanging on them? Can you find ways that they can be instruments of union instead of death?

SAVE: Save means to rescue or to keep carefully and protect it. In special moments we get glimpses of what is really true about us and what is important to be who we truly are.

How are you keeping your life in order to preserve it?

LOSE: To lose means to mislay, or to have something taken from one.

What causes you to mislay your truth? What has the power to take it from you?

GOSPEL: Gospel means literally: the good news.

At first glance it seems like bad news. It will take the death/resurrection/Pentecost experiences before the people can see the "good" in this news today. How is the text today good news for you?

GAIN /FORFIET/ EXCHANGE: All these words are transactional words. The people had what's in it for me approach which betrays their mindset. Jesus had to shock the people into a new frame of reference.

What helps someone change their mindset so as to allow a new insight to emerge?

ADULTEEROUS/SINFUL: To sin is to miss the mark. To adulterate is to make something impure or useless. *How does missing the mark lead to making something impure or useless?*

WORLD: The world is limited in what it can offer. Jesus is offering an opening to the unlimited. *Is this what we are all looking for as well?*

ASHAMED: To be ashamed is to be seen as a person who has fallen short of their potential. It also indicates that the person cares about the relationship otherwise they wouldn't care and no shame would be involved. *Do you think the people/disciples caught on to this nuance? What helps you answer this question?*

PARALLEL TEXTS: **Mk. 8:27** //Mt. 16:13-16; Lk. 9:18ff; **Mk. 8:31f** // Mt. 16:21-27; Lk. 9:22-26; **Mk. 8:34** // Mt. 10:38ff; 16:24-27; Lk. 14:26ff; **Mk. 8:35** // Jn. 12:25; **Mk. 8:38** // Mt. 10:33; Lk. 12:8;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Is. 50: 5-9a, [Ps 116:1-9](#), James 2: 2 14-18, Mk. 8: 27-35
Revised Common Lectionary: Prov. 1:20-33; [Ps. 19](#); James 3:1-12; Mk. 8: 27-38;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The image of the cross was to change humanity, not a necessary transaction to change God—as if God needed changing! Duns Scotus concluded that Jesus' death was not a "penal substitution" but a divine epiphany for all to see. Jesus was pure gift. The idea of gift is much more transformative than necessity, payment, or transaction. It shows that God is not violent, but loving. It is we who are violent. For the Franciscan school, Jesus was not changing God's mind about us; he was changing our minds about God. If God and Jesus are not violent or vindictive, then our excuse for the same is forever taken away from us. If God is punitive and torturing, then we have permission to do the same. Thus grew much of the church's violent history. The cross was not necessary, but a pure gift so that humanity could witness God's outflowing Love in dramatic form. Richard Rohr

Mk. 8.34–38: On discipleship (Mt 16.24–28; Lk 9.23–27; cf. Mt 10.32–33; Lk 12.4–9). 8.34–38: Mark emphasizes the high stakes, necessity of decision, and the potential for persecution; the greater the eternal danger, the greater the salvation, and the greater the necessity of being part of the elect community. The turbulent events and interparty strife of the period leading up to the Jewish War and afterwards would make this language even more compelling. 35: Save . . . lose . . . lose . . . save, self-preservation cannot be the highest value. 38: This adulterous and sinful generation, like those who murmured against Moses (Deut 32.20). Adultery, as in the Hebrew Bible, is a stand-in for sin generally, especially the sin of idolatry (e.g., Jer 3.1–5). The Son of Man is the figure who will carry out the divine judgment. Pgs/ 77-78. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

The selection for today is found at the midpoint of the Gospel. It concludes the first half, with its mission in Galilee. Now, leaving Galilee behind, it turns toward Jerusalem, where the second half of the narrative will take place. [Fr. Robert Beck](#)

And there is still a second potential pitfall: We can have the right answers and the right energy, but have the wrong understanding of those answers. We see this, for example, in Mark's Gospel when Jesus asks the disciples the question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answers, and answers correctly, by saying: "You are the Christ, the Messiah." But he is immediately shut down by Jesus ("Don't tell that to anyone!") and is subsequently rebuked with the words: "Get behind me, Satan!" Why? Wasn't he correct? Peter's answer was correct, Jesus was the Christ, but his understanding of what that meant was mostly wrong. For Peter, the concept of a Messiah connoted earthly power and especially earthly privilege, whereas for Jesus it meant suffering and dying. Peter had the right answer, but the wrong understanding of that answer. Some scholars speculate that this is the real reason behind the so-called "messianic secret" in the Gospels, where Jesus repeatedly asks his disciples to not reveal his identity. His reluctance to have his disciples broadcast publicly who he is was based upon his fear that they could not, before the resurrection and Pentecost, properly understand his identity and would invariably preach a false message. Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Right Answer Alone is Not Enough](#)

The Staurogram: The earliest images of [Jesus on the cross](#). Short article on how the early church started to use the cross as their symbol.

The second sacred image that the cross echoes is the "Lifted-Up One," and it comes from the bronze snake in the desert. YHWH tells Moses to raise up a serpent on a pole, and "anyone who has been bitten by a serpent and looks upon it will be healed" (Numbers 21:8). It is like a homeopathic symbol. The very thing that is killing the Children of Israel is the thing that will heal them! It is presented as a vaccine that will give you just enough of the disease so you can develop a resistance to it. The cross dramatically raises up the problem of ignorant hatred for all to see, hoping to inoculate us against doing the same thing and projecting our violence on ward into history. Richard Rohr

Jesus says: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him ... take up his cross and follow me". He does not say: "Make a cross" or "Look for a cross." Each of us has a cross to carry. There is no need to make one or look for one. The cross we have is hard

enough for us! But are we willing to take it up, to accept it as our cross? Maybe we can't study, maybe we are handicapped, maybe we suffer from depression, maybe we experience conflict in our families, maybe we are victims of violence or abuse. We didn't choose any of it, but these things are our crosses. We can ignore them, reject them, refuse them or hate them. But we can also take up these crosses and follow Jesus with them. Henri Nouwen

When somebody has an answer for every question, it is a sign that they are not on the right road. They may well be false prophets, who use religion for their own purposes, to promote their own psychological or intellectual theories. God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises. We are not the ones to determine when and how we will encounter him; the exact times and places of that encounter are not up to us. Someone who wants everything to be clear and sure presumes to control God's transcendence. 42. Nor can we claim to say where God is not, because God is mysteriously present in the life of every person, in a way that he himself chooses, and we cannot exclude this by our presumed certainties. Even when someone's life appears completely wrecked, even when we see it devastated by vices or addictions, God is present there. If we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit rather than our own preconceptions, we can and must try to find the Lord in every human life. This is part of the mystery that a gnostic mentality cannot accept, since it is beyond its control. [Pope Francis 1](#)

The numerical value of the letters in the word "Satan" (Hebrew: *Hasatan*) is 364, the total number of days in a year, less one. Satan can accuse the Jewish people and lead them astray every day of the year, with the exception of Yom Kippur. On that day the Holy One, praised be He, says to Satan, "You have no power over them today. Nevertheless, go and see what they are doing." When Satan finds them all fasting and praying, clothed in white garments like angels, he immediately returns in shame and confusion. The Holy One ask him, "How are My children?" Satan answers, "They are like angels, and I have no power over them." Thereupon the Holy One, praised be He, puts Satan in chains and declares to His people, "I have forgiven you.. Pg. 196
Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism. NY. Touchstone Books. 1991.

Remember the very word "satan" literally means the accuser. The constant satanic impulse is to try to change others instead of changing ourselves. Richard Rohr

Jesus says that if we try to preserve our lives, we will lose them, but that if we are willing to give our lives unto him and his community in accordance with the new vision he is presenting, then we shall live without limit. The seeking to preserve one's life is the attempt to protect what one possesses of being by denying one's own life to others. This method, while it works for the definition of objects in the world-including people, insofar as they are considered "objects," thrown outside one another-is precisely wrong for persons and must come to a self-destructive end when applied to them. It does not see deeply enough into the nature of the evolving reflexively conscious being. It does not leave enough room for expansion and growth, and especially, it does not provide an opening for the mutation in consciousness that enables life to renew itself. On the other hand, if we identify ourselves as acts of life enhancement by sharing our lives with our fellows, then life can go on indefinitely, growing, expanding, complexifying and unifying, rising to new levels of consciousness and freedom. The question for us is, can we feel secure living without limits, without negations? What can we put in their place to establish our self-identity? Pg. 156.
Bruteau, Beatrice. The Grand Option: Personal Transformation and a New Creation. South Bend, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

If God's compassion reveals itself in the downward path of Jesus Christ, then our compassion toward each other will involve following in his path and participating in this self-emptying, humiliating movement. There is little doubt that the disciples of Jesus understood their call as a call to make God's compassion present in this world by moving with Jesus into positions of servant hood. Nouwen, Henri, et al. [Compassion](#). NY. Image Books. 1983.

Son of Man: an enigmatic title. Jewish apocryphal tradition (1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch) uses it to describe a unique religious personage, a messiah with extraordinary spiritual endowments. Jesus' use of it seems to derive from Ex. 2, where it is a title of humility, and Dan. 3:13f, where it indicates a clearly messianic figure. It expresses for him the twofold destiny, of suffering and of glory. Peter, along with the other disciples, fails (despite his confession) to grasp the association of suffering and death with the office of Messiah.

The soul is the adhesive that holds us together, the principle of integration and individuation within us. The soul not only makes us alive, it also makes us a one.

Caesarea Philippi: was located at the foot of Mount Hermon, where, as a sparkling stream, the most eastern source of the Jordan River rushes out from a cave at the base of a great cliff and goes on to join other sources of the famous river. Being well watered, the place has a variety of trees, vines, and flowering shrubs and is one of the most beautiful localities in all the Holy Land. In Old Testament times it had a shrine dedicated to Baal, while later the Greeks built a shrine to Pan, the god of nature, and called the place Paneas (the city of Pan). In 20 B.C. Herod the Great built a white marble temple here, and dedicated it to Augustus Caesar. At Herod's death the city fell to his son, Herod Philip, who enlarged and beautified the place and named it Caesarea Philippi, in order to gain the favor of his emperor, Tiberius Caesar, and to distinguish it from the better-known capital and seaport of Caesarea on the coast. It was to this area of natural beauty that Jesus took his disciples for a brief period of rest and devotion, and where, after prayer, he asked

them, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter made the great declaration, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt.16:16, Mk.9:18). In medieval times (A.D. 1120) the Crusaders built a castle here on a mountain spur some 1150 feet above the gushing fountain, and called it The Castle of Subeibeh.

Today, masses of building stone, pieces of broken columns, and half-buried arches are strewn over the site of the city. On the face of the great cliff around the grotto, from which emerges the stream, are several niches, and a Greek inscription to the effect that "Pan and his Nymphs haunt this place." Another inscription speaks of the "Priest of the god Pan." A hoard of coins has been found. On one is pictured the sphinx or pipe of Pan; on another Pan leans on a tree playing his flute; on a third is shown the mouth of the cavern and Pan, within, playing the flute; and on a fourth coin is the name of the city, "Caesarea-Paneion." High on the mountain, overlooking Caesarea Philippi, stands the Castle of Subeibeh surrounded by walls ten feet thick, one hundred feet high, and strengthened by numerous round towers. The interior of the old fortress is an uneven area of four or five acres, dotted here and there by houses, cisterns, huge walls, and wide courtyards. The castle is old and worn by time and the elements, but is better preserved than many other castles of this area. Biblical Archaeology Review.

A healthy soul, therefore, must do two things for us. First, it must put some fire in our veins, keep us energized, vibrant, living with zest, and full of hope as we sense that life is, ultimately, beautiful and worth living. Whenever this breaks down in us, something is wrong with our soul. When cynicism, despair, bitterness, or depression paralyzes our energy, part of the soul is hurting. Second, a healthy soul has to keep us fixed together. It has to continually give us a sense of who we are, where we came from, where we are going, and what sense there is in all of this.

Rolheiser, Ronald. The Holy Longing. NY. Doubleday. 1999. Pages 13-14.

As individuals and as communities and as Church, we need to take the words of Jesus to heart and to apply them to the choice of living in the spirit or living in fear. "For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mk. 8:35). The fear of losing something by being open or by honestly seeking the truth will inevitably result in the loss of the life that Jesus wants us to have. Life has to change and grow if it is to remain life. Conserving what we have is important, but what we have is best conserved if it is living, in light and fresh air, not in darkness and stale inflexibility. Heaps, John. A Love That Dares to Question: A Bishop Challenges His Church. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans Pub. Col. 1998. Pg. 42.

Love, that is, fulfills and humanizes us; and human beings will find meaning, integrity, and completeness in their lives if only they will let go – and not just once, but more and more – to the point of death and self negation.

Lewis, Alan E. Between Cross and Resurrection. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs 132-135. To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005 Pgs. 138-142.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 157-160.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2011-12. Pgs. 127-129.

Freeman, Sean PARABLES, PSALMS, PRAYERS. Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1985. **THE CHURCH TROUBLEMAKER:** Pages 42-3.

ben Shea, Noah. JACOB THE BAKER. Villard Books, NY. 1989. **LOOSING YOURSELF:** Pages 46-7.

Shea, John. STORIES OF FAITH. Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1980. **NIGHT OF PRAYER:** Pages 196-7