

Understanding our faith
4

Jesus and the peaceable kingdom

Reading

Mark 8:27-38; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 2:1-10

Teaching

Who do we say that Jesus is? What do we believe about Jesus Christ?

(1) We believe Jesus is God's Son, who brings salvation through his love. In Jesus' time, many people hoped God would intervene in their world and send a great leader to set things right. As Jesus did his mighty deeds and taught with authority, many hoped this was the One.

Peter confesses in Mark 8 that Jesus is this hoped-for one, the messiah. And, as we read, we know that Peter is correct. Peter does see accurately. Jesus *is* the messiah.

But Peter is also *wrong*. Immediately after Peter's confession—"You are the Messiah"—Jesus begins to talk about what his messiahship means. Jesus starts to teach that as messiah he will undergo great suffering, and be rejected

by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed. Jesus, the messiah, will *not* be setting things right with brute force and will *not* be establishing a new empire in the manner of King David.

Jesus, the messiah, will bring God's new age into being and herald the outpouring of God's salvation by *suffering and dying*. That the messiah's victory involves his own suffering confounds the people's expectations. It

confounds Peter's expectations. Jesus, the messiah, does not stand for power-over others. Jesus, the messiah, does not stand for easy victory and glory before human beings. Jesus, the messiah, has to do with consistent, persevering love and compassion and openness—even in the face of violence from those who resent that kind of love.

(2) We believe Jesus is the model human being, who asks us to follow his way of living. Practical life is central to theology. How we live *and* what we believe go together hand-in-glove. What do we believe about Jesus Christ? We believe that our confession of Christ as savior *and* our following Christ in discipleship *together* make up our Christology. What matters about Jesus Christ includes his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus matters because he won us salvation by dying for our sins *and* because he showed us how to live.

(3) We believe that Jesus is God-with-us, who shows us that the power of love is the most important kind of power. In Jesus, we see God. In Jesus' birth, we see God entering the world on behalf of hurting humanity. In Jesus' life, we see God's chosen one revealing human life as it is meant to be lived. In Jesus' death, we see Jesus' faithfulness standing the ultimate test, the "rulers of this age" crucifying him (1 Cor. 2:8). In Jesus' resurrection, we see God's vindication of Jesus' life. We learn just how faithful God is to his promise of eternal life for those who trust in his mercy. Jesus shows us that the power of love is the most important kind of power.

What matters about Jesus Christ includes his life, death, and resurrection. He is our savior who died for our sins and he is our model who shows us how to live.