

Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent

"But who do you say that I am?"

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We are in a time of penance. We are in a time of asceticism. We are in a time of discipline. And for what? For the sake of this Jesus. Now Jesus asks us: *'Who do you say that I am?'*

Who do you say He is? Who is this that, when you were baptized, when you were confirmed, you promised loyalty to, even loyalty of death. Who is this that, when you were asked *'Will you hold to this confession, even unto death,'* you said, *'I will.'*

You swore it. You said *'I will die for Jesus.'* That is good, assuming we, when we all swore so, were being honest. But the Lord does not cease His questioning of us there. He does not merely ask *'Will you die for me?'* He demands of you now: *'Who do you say that I am?'*

'Some say John the Baptist, Some say Elijah, and others, one of the prophets.'

'Who do you say that I am?'

Did we not all say it, when we were baptized, when we were confirmed?

'You are the Christ.'

This is our confession. And as Christians, having made this confession, we are told regularly *'Invite your friends to Church. Invite them to Bible Study. Invite them to Sunday School. Invite them to Communion. Invite them to the potluck. Tell your friends. Tell your neighbors. Tell your coworkers. Tell your family. Tell them. Tell them.'*

Tell them that *'you are the Christ.'*

Yet it is written:

'But he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.'

So Christ tells us. Now is not the time for telling. It is not the time for inviting. It is not that we cannot or should not do these things. But Christ tells us that there is, for this time, something else towards which our attention should be cast.

'And he 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.'

Now is not a time for telling, unless we tell *'Behold, him who was made sin for us.'* Now is not a time for inviting, unless we invite *'Come and see, and I saw.'* Now is a time for beholding. Behold. A thousand times the Scriptures cry out *'Behold.'* And a thousand times we ignore it. Now the Lord commands St. Peter, Now the Lord commands you *'Tell no one,'* that is *'shut up,'* and *'Behold.'*

'Behold' 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.'

It is not at all strange to be commanded to behold. The word Israel means *'Him who has seen God.'* And we are Israel. So Christ commands us to see God, to become Israel, to embrace our name, to become our new nature. *'Behold, the Lord your God.'*

But how do we see God? How do we imagine Him?

An unutterable light. An imponderable glory. An infinite radiance. An unlimited power. These come to mind when we say the word *'God.'*

You may think of God this way, *'and so do the also demons, and tremble.'* You may imagine such a God, and the Lord rebukes you: *'Get behind me Satan.'*

'Behold,' 'Do you not know that it is necessary that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised?'

There is no God but that God which bears a cross. There is no God but that God who will suffer for those He loves. There is no God but that God that will be

betrayed, that will bleed, that will be beaten and scourged and pierced and whipped and mocked and hated. There is no God but the Son of Man who *must suffer many things*.

Lent, dear Christians, is like a journey through the wilderness. From a distance, we draw closer and closer to a distant cross, a distant crucifixion, a distant execution.

We draw closer, with the confession of St. Peter upon our lips. *'Thou art the Christ.'*

And as we draw closer, closer to the blood, to the agony, to the cries, to the torments, indeed, to the cross itself, we will touch the wounded feet of Jesus. We will smell the blood of his wounds. We will see his pierced brow. Indeed *'we will see Him as He is'* for *'we will see him face to face.'*

And when you see Him, sacrificed and tortured upon a tree for His love of you, your lips will cry no longer the confession of St. Peter, but the confession of St. Thomas:

'My Lord, and My God!'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Romans 5:1-11; Mark 8:27-38.