**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 10-24-2021**

One of the things that is helpful in a marriage is to have similar desires when it comes to children with a potential spouse. It is helpful to be of a similar mind when it comes to those important things. Thankfully, Kara and I learned that we both wanted to have 4 or 5 children so it was exciting for us when we learned that God was blessing us with a child. Certainly, there was levels of nervousness with this as well, but it was mostly excitement.

And then came the exciting day when Leah decided to be born. There was an adrenalin rush as we are driving to the hospital. And before we knew it, Leah was born.

I remember we had lots of family there to celebrate this special moment and many people enjoyed holding her in their arms.

But then came the reality of life with a baby. She was born at 4:34 in the morning and I remember we were both totally exhausted later that day. Certainly, Kara had good reason to be exhausted, but me on the other hand, I didn’t have as good of an excuse.

The simple reality was that although we were both so very happy to have her, we knew that there would be challenges that would come with parenting. Challenges like sleep depravation or just caring for the needs of a little one. We have friends that are currently going through this challenging stage as well.

Perhaps you can think of similar experiences from your own life, whether it’s with parenting or one of those expectations versus reality moments… (maybe with a new job or a new school or a new relationship or some other new endeavor).

In speaking on our situation, despite any challenges that have come with parenting, we are so thankful for Leah and each of our children. They are all a true blessing.

Today, as we continue our sermon series on the 7 moments we find Jesus praying in Luke’s Gospel, we find Jesus asking a huge question that will set the course for the rest of His earthly ministry. It would be an expectation verses reality moment. And Jesus was preparing for this moment in prayer.

Let us hear God’s Word together from **Luke 9:18-26**

**18Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?”**

**19They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”**

**20“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”**

**Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.”**

**21Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”**

**23Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? 26Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.**

This conversation is a turning point in the Gospels. These disciples had followed Jesus for some time, likely years. They had experienced the joy and excitement of seeing Jesus’ miracles and had stood amazed at His teaching on multiple occasions. They believed in Him not only as their rabbi, but also as the promised Messiah and Savior.

But a turning point was coming. Jesus was preparing to explain more of what His role of Messiah would involve. And not only that, it would mean to continue as one of His followers.

And so, Jesus prays. This is the 3rd time Luke explicitly tells us that Jesus is praying. And after His time in prayer, He asks them a critically important question.

Verse 18 tells us that Jesus was praying in private. Again, He was very intentional of prioritizing fellowship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Like Jesus, if we want to have deep fellowship with the Lord, private prayer is very important.

But in the midst of this time of prayer, it becomes clear to Jesus that now was the time to ask His closest followers how they understood His identity.

First, he eases into the subject by asking them an easier question. **“Who do the crowds say I am?”**

This is a softball question, so to speak. It is easier to answer. And so, it appears that different disciples spoke out various things like “**Some say John the Baptist or others say Elijah and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”**

All of these responses would be hitting pretty close to the mark. The prophets were led by the Lord and spoke messages God wanted to convey to the people. Certainly Jesus did this. But was Jesus more than a prophet? And the answer is yes indeed He is more than a prophet.

Jesus wanted to hear what His closest followers would say. And then he asks them this critical question point blank. **“But what about you? Who do you say I am?”**

There would be no hedging their answers now. This would be where the rubber meets the road.

And we see Peter raising his voice and saying **“God’s Messiah.”**

This was clearly the right answer. Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus was the Anointed One of God, deity in the flesh.

But now that it was clear to everyone present that Jesus was this Messiah, He begins to say some very challenging words.

First, in verse 21 we read that Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.

While Jesus knew that others must know of His identity, there was a timing to things. And he didn’t want to let the cat out of the bag just yet. Perhaps He sensed that the crowds would become too big for Him to easily get to where He desired to go or perhaps the people would try to forcefully get Him to try to overthrow the Roman oppressors. And so Jesus tells them to not tell this to anyone. Later He would tell them to say this to everyone, but not yet.

And then beginning in verse 22, Jesus begins to explain what His role as Messiah would entail. Up until this time, the disciples were likely filled with adrenalin and excitement at the possibilities of what Jesus might do. The desire of the majority of Jewish people at the time was for the Messiah to be a war hero who would destroy the enemies of Israel.

That was the common expectation. A deliverer who would overthrow the Romans.

But Jesus begins to make it clear that He did not come to do that at that time. While He certainly had the power to destroy the Romans, Jesus didn’t come to do that.

He came to defeat a far more serious enemy than Rome. He came to set people free from sin and everything connected to sin.

And so Jesus states **“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”**

Picture yourself around that camp fire with Jesus and the disciples. Likely you and I would be as stunned as they were.

What? What are you talking about Jesus? You can’t suffer and be killed? They were probably all thinking this, but Simon Peter, who was typically quick to speak, tries to rebuke Jesus. And then Jesus tells Peter “Get behind me Satan! You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Luke does not include this rebuke of Jesus, but it is described in Matthew & Mark’s Gospels.

Luke, instead, goes right to the next major point. But if it wasn’t difficult enough to hear that your Messiah would experience much suffering and then be killed, Jesus goes on to tell them some words what were equally difficult, if not more so.

He tells all of them **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in His glory and in the glory of the Fathe rand of the holy angels.”**

Sisters and Brothers, these are some of the strongest words of Jesus. Jesus not only explains that He came to suffer and be killed, but that His followers must also be willing every day to suffer and be killed for following after Jesus. To a life of denying oneself at the center of one’s life. Jesus must be the center – whether one is in physical danger for following after Jesus or not – Jesus must be at the center of one’s life.

This was not a feel good, seeker-sensitive, low-cost message. Jesus is saying that this is the way the Messiah will accomplish His mission. And this is the way that you must follow Him.

Jesus knew that this would be a hard message and He was praying in advance.

**So friends, as we process this heavy moment in the gospels with Jesus praying and then asking these questions that led to Him revealing His identity and mission as the Messiah, what implications does it have for our lives today?** I think that there are many. But they all relate to this.

Remember that Jesus didn’t come to rescue us from a fiercer enemy than the Romans or any human leaders; He came to rescue us from the power of sin. And as we live each day with our allegiance to Jesus, we must be willing to suffer for Him in this world.

It is not easy to be a Christian. We are not to become Christians to improve our life or to live our best life now, so to speak.

Oftentimes Jesus is presented as a self-improving option for people. Choose Jesus and He will make you successful and confident and powerful.

But that’s not the message of the gospel.

But Jesus didn’t come to make you more prosperous and powerful and wealthy, He came to give You true life. True peace. True hope. True grace.

He is the One that everyone needs.

And this passage reminds us that not only did Jesus not come to live for Himself, but we as His followers are to live not for ourselves, but for Him. We are to deny ourselves. We are to deny living with ourselves at the center of life each day. Jesus must be our Lord every day.

And following after Jesus will lead to not everybody liking us. Sharing Jesus with others may cost us. Some people may not want to be our friend. Some people would even seek to do us harm.

But our life is not our own any more. Our life is in Christ’s hands. We are to live each day for Him.

So take Christ with you as you go. Everywhere you go, you are His ambassador. Do not be ashamed to speak the Name of Jesus.