

Take-Home Sheet | Session 8

The Hinge: Who Do You Say That I Am? (Mark 8:27-9:1)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

At Caesarea Philippi, under a cliff of dead gods and a temple to Caesar, Jesus asked the question the whole Gospel had been building: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ", the first true title spoken by a human being in this Gospel (check the exact wording of your sealed guess). And then everything turned: Jesus silenced them and, for the first time, spoke plainly: the Son of man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and after three days rise. The "must" points to the Scriptures, above all Isaiah 53, the Servant despised, rejected, wounded for our transgressions. And there was a key to eight weeks of silence commands: the title without the cross would be heard as politics and glory, so the title waits until the cross defines it.

Peter, right title in hand, rebuked the plan, and heard the hardest sentence Jesus ever spoke to a friend: "Get behind me, Satan!" A Messiah without a cross is the tempter's old offer, most dangerous in a loving friend's voice. But notice the mercy in the grammar: "get behind me" is the disciple's position, not the exile's, Peter was re-positioned, not expelled. And last week's riddle paid off: the blind man who saw "men like trees, walking" reads as the parable; Peter, right title, blurred meaning, as the man. Then Jesus widened the circle to all of us: deny yourself, take up your cross, follow, because "whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." The life we clutch is leaking anyway; the life spent for him is the only one beyond loss.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Justin Martyr (Dialogue with Trypho 89-96)

In the mid-second century, Justin answered the objection Peter felt: a crucified Messiah seems cursed by the Law itself. Read Isaiah 53 whole, he answered: the Servant enters glory precisely through suffering; the curse he bore was ours, taken willingly. The scandal of the cross is the shape of the rescue.

Voices of the Church: St. Leo the Great (Sermon 4, on the faith of Peter)

Peter's confession came from the Father's revelation and became the rock on which Christ builds his Church, a strength given to Peter, not generated by him. The Church's stability never depended on the steadiness of Peter's nerves; the rock is what grace made of him.

Voices of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Matthew, Homily 55)

To deny oneself is to treat the old self as a stranger whose claims we no longer recognize; to take up the cross is to live ready daily, carrying it not as punishment but as trophy. And Christ repays absurdly: lose a life that was always leaking away, and receive one that cannot be taken.

Live It This Week

- Carry your sentence: put your one-line answer to "Who do you say that I am?" somewhere you will see it daily, and let it interrogate your week.

- Choose one concrete self-denial for seven days, "for my sake and the gospel's": a comfort surrendered, and the freed time or money given to God or neighbor.
- Pray for the Pope by name this week, the successor of the man who got it right, got it wrong, and was prayed for by Christ himself.

Scripture Memory Verse

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Mark 9. Last week Jesus promised some standing there would see the kingdom come with power. Chapter 9 answers.

Catechism References

CCC 440, 601, 618, 890-891