

# SATAN NEVER QUILS

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**GENESIS 17:1-7**

**MARK 8:31-38**

**LENT II**

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## **LAST WEEK WE WITNESSED THE DRAMA OF SATAN AND JESUS BATTLING IN THE WILDERNESS.**

This morning's drama features Jesus and Satan, battling near Caesarea Philippi, a city dedicated to Caesar located some miles north of Galilee. Jesus, reprising his role as God's Warrior King, is fighting to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. In this scene, the role of Satan, fighting to block the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth, is played by Simon Peter, the chief apostle.

As the group approaches the city of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks his disciples the critical question: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter responds for the group-no doubt without consulting them-that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the anointed of the Lord, the king of the coming Kingdom. Like everyone Peter has some very definite ideas about what all of that entailed.

## **JESUS IS QUITE AWARE OF WHAT MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD'S ANOINTED.**

Therefore he uses this occasion as what we would call a teaching moment. He tells Peter and the rest that he is indeed the Messiah, but that the term has become distorted by hundreds of years of human wishful thinking. For centuries human beings have been telling God how they want to be saved and just what that salvation should entail. It involves national vindication, political revenge, and victory over their enemies, followed by peace, and immense prosperity. By which they mean prosperity for them. They believed that the Messiah would deliver all of the above.

## **JESUS PROCEEDED TO BURST THAT BUBBLE.**

"And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised in three days." To inaugurate the rule of God on earth involves by necessity suffering and dying at the hands of those who want to keep that rule themselves. To be the one bringing in God's involves, of necessity, stepping on the toes of the empire builders and kingdom defenders of this world. It involves incurring their wrath.

Peter is horrified at the prospect. Jesus has shattered his hopes and dreams. He tells Jesus that he is speaking like someone possessed, someone who has lost his mind. Peter will not accept Jesus' picture of the nature and destiny of God's Messiah. Instead Peter tries to thrust his messianic dreams on Jesus.

### **JESUS WILL HAVE NONE OF IT.**

He glares at Peter and calls him Satan. That is to say Peter looks at things from a fallen creature's point of view and not through the eyes of the Creator God. ***Jesus tells Peter that it is Satanic to try to tell God how to be God.*** Jesus affirms that God knows what is wrong with His creation, and God knows how to put things right. God knows what is good for His creation; humans obviously do not. From the time of Eden to the present, man has been singing the same song, "I did it my way". The world's situation is the sorry result of that performance. God is telling the world through Jesus to do it His way. God is showing the world through Jesus what His way entails.

## **AFTER REBUKING PETER, JESUS ADDRESSES THE MULTITUDE.**

He looks at them as a pool of possible disciples. He tells them exactly what that discipleship entails: self-sacrifice, disciplined self-denial and cross-bearing, a Churchillian offer at best. Absent is any promise of success, popularity or prosperity. Jesus says, "Follow me, and be shunned, ridiculed, and abused. Follow me only if you are willing to put your self-interest aside and focus on what God is doing to bring in His divine rule. Follow me only if you believe life in the kingdom of God is more important than life in the kingdoms of men and women".

## **NO WONDER PETER REJECTED ALL THIS AS THE RAVINGS OF A MADMAN.**

Now if it was difficult for the disciples and would-be disciples to accept this in their time and place, how much more difficult is it for us to accept it in ours?

We live in a society that seeks to avoid pain at all costs. We have pills, capsules, caplets, gel-tabs, liquids, powders, and patches aimed at eliminating pain of all descriptions and in all locations.

We live in a society which views modest inconvenience as an unbelievable burden. We view minor bothers with the same horror as our ancestors viewed crossing the Rockies in a blizzard.

In our society inviting people to embrace rejection and suffering on God's behalf will guarantee a very limited and tepid response. No wonder some preachers have changed the invitation to discipleship to read "Follow me and become successful, popular, and prosperous." No wonder many folks have baptized their own ideas and practices and called them "Christian". Surely we must confess that we are more like Peter than Jesus. We see the world through our own very human lenses rather than through those of Jesus.

## **JESUS, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO STAND OVER AGAINST PAINLESS AND COMFORTABLE CHRISTIANITY.**

It's not that Jesus is in favor of pain and suffering. He asked God to remove that cup from him- if it were possible. But it is not possible. What Jesus is in favor of is God's rule on earth. What Jesus is in favor of is doing those things which promote the coming of that rule.

What Jesus opposes is what blocks or impedes the coming of God's rule on earth. Jesus knows that in a world obsessed with

power, violence, sex, wealth, comfort, and convenience bringing in God's kingdom will of necessity involve repentance, issuing forth in self-sacrifice, self-denial, and suffering love. The embodiment of all of this is the cross of Christ. This was Jesus' message to both disciples and would-be disciples on that hot afternoon north of Galilee.

This is not a popular message. It was not popular in 27 AD, and it is not popular today. The mega churches did not get to have 10,000 members by preaching self-denial and cross-bearing. They did not become wealthy by calling on people to give up their cherished notions and prejudices and embrace God's views and values.

## **TODAY IS THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.**

The season calls on us to repent. It's time for a spiritual Spring housecleaning. It's time to toss out all our non-Gospel ideas of what it means to be God's anointed, and what it means to be a faithful follower of His anointed. It is time to rearrange the furniture in our minds, wash the windows leading into our souls, and permit God's light to shine therein.

May God give us the wisdom to know His will and the courage and power to bend our will to His.