

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

### LOOK

If someone on the street asked you who Jesus is, how would you answer?

### BOOK

Mark 8:27-38

[27Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” 28And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” 29He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” 30And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.]

31Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

34He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38Those who are ashamed of me and of my

words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

- 1) Why do you think Peter rebuked Jesus? What were Peter’s expectations of the Messiah?
- 2) Why do you think the response of Jesus to Peter was so harsh?
- 3) Discuss what Jesus meant by ‘human things’ and ‘divine things’.
- 4) What does Jesus mean when he says, ‘take up your cross’? What would the cross have meant in the time of Jesus? Remember that Mark wrote his gospel 60 – 70 years after Jesus’ birth.

### TOOK

- 1) Are there times when you feel like God is absent? How is that for you? How does that inform your understanding of God?
- 2) How has God been present to you in pandemic times? How has God seemed absent in the pandemic?
- 3) How is the God you want different than the God you seem to expect?
- 4) “Deny yourself” may mean giving up what we expect our lives and our God to be, in order to embrace God’s will for us as revealed in suffering, death and resurrection. How does this apply in your life?
- 5) God or faith does not promise us that life will be easy or pain-free. What kind of God do you need to

sustain you in these uncertain times? Prayer is not a demand to God but puts us in alignment with God's will - 'thy will be done'. How will you pray in these in-between times? How will you foster trust in God?

'You can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.'  
Anne Lamott

'Again and again I tell God I need help, and he says, Well, isn't that fabulous? Because I need help too. So you go get that old woman over there some water, and I'll figure out what we're going to do with your stuff.' Anne Lamott

Here is the link to the article I referenced in my sermon: 'Stumbling into the next stage of your pandemic life' by Lindsey Antin in on-line magazine Greater Good.  
[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/stumbling\\_into\\_the\\_next\\_stage\\_of\\_your\\_pandemic\\_life](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/stumbling_into_the_next_stage_of_your_pandemic_life)