

Mark 8:27 - 9:1 (NIV)

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

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

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

9 And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

WHO DO YOU THINK JESUS IS? (Mark 8:27 - 9:1): Leader's Notes

Summary:

The disciples get *who* Jesus is, but miss *what that means*. While Jesus is the Messiah, that doesn't mean a life of earthly triumph. Instead, it means a life of sacrifice and self-denial. It's only through "losing" our lives that we truly "save" them as Jesus' disciples.

Cultural Notes:

- There was a religious and cultural expectation that Jewish religious figures of the past ("Elijah" and "the prophet") would return before the Messiah came.
- The "elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law" were the religious elite of Jesus' day (sort of like pastors or seminary professors).

Key Observations:

- Peter is the first one to call Jesus "the Christ," and he is right.
- The contrast between Peter's confession of Jesus as "Messiah" and being called "Satan" only a few seconds later is shocking and jarring. Satan is a tempter, so it somehow seems that Peter is "tempting" Jesus.
- Jesus is making wordplay with the themes of "losing" and "saving," flipping them on their heads and contrasting them. The way to lose your life is to try and save it. The way to save it is to lose it.

Discussion Questions:

- How can Peter move so quickly from calling Jesus "Messiah" to Jesus calling him "Satan"? What does Peter understand? What is Peter missing?
- Who do "people of today" say that Jesus is? Who do you think he is?
- What is "tempting" about Peter's rebuke of Jesus?
- What do you think of Jesus' words that "the only way to save your life is to lose it?" Have you seen this to be true in your life? How?
- Answer Jesus' question: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, but forfeit his soul?" How have you tried to "gain the whole world" in the past? Did it satisfy you?

Ideas for Application:

- Talk with each other about what is compelling about being a disciple of Jesus. What costs scare you? Do they seem worth it?
- Have each person write an answer to Jesus' question, "Who do you think I am?" and share it with each other or someone else.