

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
Series: On Your Mark
June 7, 2009

“Is This Going to Hurt?”
Mark 8:27-9:1

I had a boil several years ago. A boil is a very painful puss infected festering sore under the skin. I had never had a boil before nor have I since; and I pray I never will again. This experience gave me empathy for Job, whom the Scripture tells us had boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. My problem started as a minor blemish, but then grew worse and worse until it was the size of a silver dollar. It was in my left armpit and rendered the entire left side of my body in acute pain. Just the normal impact of walking sent shudders of pain through my body.

I went to the doctor who took one look at it and told me that it had to be *lanced and drained*. To lance it meant the doctor was going to stab it with a sharp object. To drain it meant the doctor was going to squeeze it until it was empty of infectious fluid. I asked: “Is this going to hurt?” He replied, “*Yes, it is going to hurt very badly.*” “Is there any other way?” “No.” The doctor was true to his word. It was excruciating. The pain had to first get worse if the boil was to heal.

And this is something of a picture of the gospel. The boil of sin could not be healed by wishful thinking. The pain had to get worse. Christ had to be lanced with the nail and spear – and God’s wrath squeezed every ounce of justice out of Him until His body was limp and dead on the cross. His pain was necessary to purchase our clean bill of health.

And that idea - of the necessity of pain - continues as our model for discipleship. The only problem is that we don't much care for pain. We don't like physical pain, emotional pain, relational pain, spiritual pain, good pain or bad pain. Pain is our kryptonite. It drains us of our strength. I titled my sermon this morning, "Is this going to hurt?" Because when you become a Christian, and as you get to know Jesus, at some point you must turn to Him and ask: "Jesus, is this going to hurt? Did you suffer so I don't have to? Or as my example? Do I need to expect pain as well?"

Take your Bibles out and turn to Mark chapter 8. We officially at the halfway point in the book - which is a significant turning point. The first part of the book focused on Jesus' ministry to the crowds emphasizing Jesus' power and authority. In the second half of the book there is a completely different tone. We move from the strength of Jesus to the weakness, suffering and pain of Christ. I think you will notice that shift as we look at the text together. We will begin at verse 27.

Exposition:

Identity of Jesus (8:27-30)

Mark 8:27a Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. We begin our story with the setting. Jesus is traveling from Bethsaida where he had healed the blind man, to Caesarea Philippi, which is about a 25-mile journey due north. Caesarea Philippi is right on the border of the Gentile territory. It is as far north as you can get and still be in Israel. The city is named in honor of Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, by Philip the Tetrarch. Though in Israel it is a pagan outpost. It is the place where the half-goat god Pan is worshiped, and where in 168 B.C. the evil Antiochus Epiphanies began His

attempted extermination of the Jewish faith; which led to the Maccabean wars. I believe this setting is significant to the story. **And on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?”** At this point in the narrative we are not surprised by this question: “Who is Jesus?” It has been the central question of the book of Mark. Jesus wants to refresh the data – what are the people saying?

Let’s recall for a moment how this question has dominated the book. Who is Jesus? We heard the Father say at Jesus’ baptism: **“You are my beloved Son, in you I am well-pleased” (1:11)**. Later in chapter one a demon confesses, **“I know who you are – the Holy One of God” (1:24)**. Another demon in chapter three confesses: **“You are the Son of God.”** At this point in the story – Jesus’ identity in the spiritual realm is crystal clear. The devil and his legions know who Jesus is. But just as clear as it is in the supernatural world, it is equally unclear in the earthly realm:

The Pharisees in chapter two call Jesus a **“blasphemer” (2:7)** and later conclude he is a **“servant of Satan and possessed Beelzebul” (3:22)**. His disciples do no better. In watching him command nature they ask, **“Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?” (4:41)**. His family, likewise, is confused by his behavior, concluding: **“He has lost his senses” (3:21)**. His friends who grew up with him ask: **“Is this not the son of Mary” (6:3)**. Nobody has gotten it right. Jesus’ identity has been hidden.

So now Jesus wants to hear (from his disciples) the current opinion of the people, and the disciples recount: **Mark 8:28 they told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.”** On *Britain’s Got Talent*, Susan Boyle said she dreamed on becoming like the great Elaine Page. If you are following the NBA Finals – there

are the comparisons of Dwight Howard to Shaq. Both examples suggest that these newcomers might one day be really great. That is like the response of the people. Their opinion of Jesus has grown so much that they compare him to the big boys - Elijah, John, perhaps Isaiah, Jeremiah. He has been elected to the Prophet's Hall of Fame.

But there is something else going on. The people really like to compare him especially to Elijah, and John the Baptist - another Elijah figure. Let me provide a little background. You will recall that Elijah did not physically die but was caught up in a whirlwind. This made him a prime candidate to someday return to earth to continue his ministry. The expectation was that Elijah would return just before the Messiah: [Mal. 4:5](#) "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. If Jesus is the returned Elijah - what does that mean? That the Messiah's entrance is not far away!

[Mark 8:29](#) And He *continued* by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Jesus turns the question on them. *Has your opinion of me changed?* Because of the disciple's profoundly poor track record on this question - we are quite pleasantly surprised that in a moment of great spiritual clarity, "Peter, answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." (29). He's got it! Hallelujah! Jesus is the Messiah!! Not the one who comes before the Messiah - but the Big Guy Himself! The dots are connected. The final piece of the puzzle is snapped into place. Hallelujah!! The veil is lifted and Jesus' identity is displayed in all its glory.

So, verse 30: [Mark 8:30](#) And He warned them to tell no one about Him. The Greek is very strong, "He rebuked them." Why? Because *sometimes you know just enough to be*

dangerous. The disciples know something, but they don't yet know enough. Years ago I knew just enough about ceramic tiling to be dangerous. I had just finished a large tile job in my home that turned out awesome. A professional tile master told me he was amazed at how nice it looked. The entrance work I did had a border and diamond design. We are talking Better Homes and Gardens. I was pretty pleased with myself. A friend who lived in a mobile home asked me to help him with his tile job. It was just small job – a bathroom. I said, "Sure, I'd love to help you." So he tiled his bathroom under my tutelage. But two weeks later he called me and said – "All the tile is cracking and popping up – what is wrong?" Well I learned that my tile job was on a concrete slab, but his was on a raised wood floor. It needed something called a concrete backer-board to absorb the movement of the floor, but I didn't know that, and so I made a mess of my friend's bathroom. I knew something – only enough to create a disaster. The disciples know Jesus' identity, but if they were to go applying that in their culture based on their own expectation, they would make a mess. They need to first, go deeper, and that is exactly what Jesus does – verse 31:

Job Description of Jesus (8:31-33)

Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Mark 8:32 And He was stating the matter plainly. Three parts to the Messiah's job description: 1) The Messiah will suffer many things. (2) The messiah will be rejected – not by rejected by the enemies of Israel but by "good guys" – the Sanhedrin made up of elders, chief priests and scribes. Then (3) He will be killed. *Instead of conquering the enemies of Israel, the Messiah is killed by the defenders of Israel.*

This was nothing like the popular expectations for the Messiah. The Pseudepigraphal book of *Psalms of Solomon*, spells out the expectations of the Messiah: “See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God. Undergird him with the strength to destroy unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction; in wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance, to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar” Psalm of Solomon 17:21-23.

In marketing you learn a concept called “cognitive dissonance.” That is when you experience conflict after purchasing a product. Peter is thrown into “cognitive dissonance” He wants a refund – verse 32: **(32b) And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. Mark 8:33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”** Peter goes from the spiritual mountaintop to the object of the most searing rebuke Jesus gives. Jesus said – there is pain up ahead for the Messiah. Peter didn’t expect that. And to be honest we have not changed much.

Cost of Following Jesus (8:34-38)

At some point you have to turn to Jesus and ask him whether this trip is going to be painful. Jesus just said it is going to be painful for me – and it is a necessary pain. Only Satan would try to stop it. *But what about for you?* Should you expect pain and rejection? What does it cost to follow Jesus? **Mark 8:34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. Mark 8:35 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but**

whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. [Mark 8:36](#) "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? [Mark 8:37](#) "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? [Mark 8:38](#) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him.

Jesus' answer is clear - His followers are bound to the same painful journey. If you want to follow Jesus - you will have to suffer and die and be rejected. Jesus says, "My road is your road. As I will take up the cross - so you too, must take up your cross. If you want to save your life - you must lose it. if you want to have my good opinion of you - you must embrace the embarrassment, pain and suffering of the cross." Sometimes we become so insulated living in Dallas - with a church on every corner. And having likeminded friends around us - that we forget there is a cost to following Christ. As Jesus faced rejection and suffering, so must His children. Why? Because sin is a festering boil and has no easy fix. Things must get worse before they get better.

IV. Getting Better

Question - Does the Christian faith have a happy ending? Yes it does. Though things can be tough now - we have the promise that things will get better. We can endure suffering and count difficulty as joy because they will not last forever. They will be redeemed for good. We go through the journey of pain to arrive at a better place.

Even in this description of the Messiahs passion the text is full of great hope. First the death of Jesus leads to resurrection life (v31). Death is only temporary. Second, Jesus' journey of humiliation and shame will be followed up by return in glory. Being despised is

only temporary (v38). Third, the apparent weakness of the kingdom will be replaced by the Kingdom coming in power (v9:1). Weakness is turned into strength.

Discipleship is learning that if we die with Christ – we will also live with Him. If we humble ourselves before Him, He will exalt us to glory in his timing. If we embrace weakness, we will one day see the Kingdom in power. It as to get worse before it gets better.

I don't know what type of suffering you are going through this morning. Perhaps you are facing your own painful trial or feeling the pressure of a fallen world. Some of you have been treated unfairly – the lack of justice eats at you. Remember – that weeping lasts but for the night, but there is a shout of joy in the morning. Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. Even as they did for Jesus.

Pastor Tim Miller tells the story of his nine-year old daughter Jennifer who was looking forward to their long anticipated family vacation to Sea World. But she became ill. The vacation was replaced by an all-night series of CT scans, X-rays and blood work at the hospital.

As morning approached, the doctors told the exhausted little girls that one more test would be needed – a spinal tap. The procedure would be painful, they said. The doctor then asked Tim if he wanted to stay in the room. He nodded, knowing he couldn't leave his daughter alone during the ordeal.

The doctors gently asked Jennifer to remove all her clothes. She looked at her dad with childlike modesty, as if to ask if that was all right. They had her curl into a tiny ball. Tim buried his face into hers and hugged her.

When the needle went in, Jennifer cried. As the searing pain increased she sobbed “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy.” Her voice becoming more earnest with each word. “Oh Daddy, can’t you please do something.”

Tim’s tears mingled with his daughters. His heart was broken. But because he loved her, he was allowing her to go through the most agonizing experience of her life. He knew that for her to recover. For her to grow and be healthy – she had to endure the pain. There was no easy fix. And during the worst of it, Tim said he thoughts went to the cross of Christ. What unspeakable pain both the Son and the Father endured for you and I.

Jesus is our example in suffering, He is our example in perseverance, and He is our example in the life and exaltation that will one day come.