



## Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 51

Sunday 28th February 2021

### Mark 8, v31-38 A Serious Misunderstanding. Lent Two.

Verse 33 of this reading reveals a moment of high drama which has taken place between Peter and Jesus. Peter v29, has recognised Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah. Peter had his own understanding of the nature and reign of God's Messiah. The Israelites believed the new Kingdom would come about as a result of a violent upheaval resulting in the crushing of Israel's enemies which would usher in a new world order a new age of peace and goodness which would last forever. Ideas about the Messianic reign were, violent, nationalistic, destructive, vengeful. (W Barclay.)

It's quite a revealing moment because it begs the question, how many of the disciples were of the same mind as Peter? It was a real flashpoint Peter feeling very affronted by Jesus reaction, Jesus expressing anger and disappointment against Peter for his failure to understand Him and the way the Kingdom of God was to be established on earth. It was clearly unthinkable for Peter that God's Messiah should be killed, defeated, in such an ignominious way.

As always Peter would have been speaking for all the other disciples who would have no doubt been just as shocked. Does this help us to understand why Judas Iscariot acted in the way he did? Was he trying to make Jesus take the kind of action many expected Him to take and because He had not done so Judas was, in effect, trying to force the pace, make things happen? In both instances there is a serious case of misunderstanding the true nature and purpose of the Messiah. One Commentator makes the point Jesus recognised the work of Satan in Peter's outburst. There he was, a close friend failing to understand and at the same time, seeking to prevent the Messiah fulfilling the work His Father had sent Him to do. You are of course aware when Jesus overcame the temptations in the wilderness Satan left him until an opportune time Luke 4 v 13. Satan using all his craftiness in attempting to use the friendship between Peter and Jesus to offer friendly, "sensible" advice which, on the surface, offered an easier way. Satan up to his old tricks trying to persuade Jesus He really did not have to go down that particular road. Stirring up those nationalistic violent feelings as a way of crushing Israel's enemies. A moment of weakness and Peter reverted to his old way of thinking. That is why Jesus rebuked him so strongly. He recognised Peter's failure in that moment was the work of Satan. "Get behind me, Satan!" "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Jesus then turns his attention to the crowd who would have witnessed what had gone on.

I detect a sense of starkness in Jesus words as he tells the crowd: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." V34. A clear warning throwing in their lot

with Him would be fraught with danger and they had to be prepared to face the ultimate penalty. When we talk of; bearing our cross, it is a reference to personal circumstances. Here Jesus makes a direct reference to the Roman practice of making the criminal condemned by due process of law carry part of his cross to his own execution. (D E Nineham.) The crowd would be familiar with the practice would they have understood the illusion here? Our commentator suggest not until the crucifixion of Jesus had taken place.

We sometimes talk glibly about, denying ourselves some thing or another. Perhaps giving up a certain treat, or other pleasure for the season of Lent. That can be challenge enough. When Jesus says they must deny themselves he is talking in terms of complete self- denial. How does that sit with today's way of life when so many of us have become totally immersed in all that modern living can provide? The past months have given the population at large both opportunity and cause to look afresh at the how and why life is lived the way it is. Suddenly released from the everyday crowded commute morning and night there has been time to stop and consider the world around them. I am reminded of the poem Leisure by William Henry Davies. What is this life if full of care We have no time to stand and stare? Lockdown has provided many people with an opportunity to re-evaluate their lives. To rediscover what really matters. That is not to deny the necessity of work we all have to earn a living to provide for our own and others daily needs. It may just be that this Lockdown will lead to a better understanding of the very real need of a work, life balance. The real question Jesus asks is "Where do you put your values in life?" (W Barclay.)

The pursuit of profit, owning a larger house, increasing the bank balance building up an increasing portfolio because that is what is expected of the successful individual can become an all-absorbing aim leaving little time for anything else. The character, Mr Banks, in Mary Poppins illustrates this so well. Employed by the Bank he judges everything on its monetary value and seeks to encourage his son to put tuppence in a Bank account and watch it grow. He seems hardly aware of the children's presence so absorbed is he in his work. Mary Poppins opens his eyes to what family life should be like. What indeed does it profit anyone to gain the whole world at the loss of everything else?

Len Fowler. Methodist Local Preacher.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,  
and his righteousness,  
and all these things shall be added unto you.  
Allelu, alleluia,

Man shall not live by bread alone,  
But by every word,  
That proceeds from the mouth of God.  
Allelu, alleluia,

Ask and it shall be given unto you,  
Seek and you shall find:  
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you.  
Allelu, alleluia.

