February 28, 2021 Lenten Devotional
Mark 8:31-38 - "Peter's Rebuke and the Cross Command"
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Then 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. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But 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."

He 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. For 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,[a] will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words[b] 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." Mark 8:31-38 NRSV

Strange Love

The weird times we are living in allow us to isolate, stay in bed, and not deal with the things that either anger, scare us, or don't agree with. It seems ironic that Lent now being in full-swing is coinciding with a year of us dealing with lockdowns and our ruminating thoughts. Lent is a time to turn inward and outward, but that seems like a bit much right now doesn't it? Maybe it's time for a challenge.

In this passage, Jesus is talking to the people gathered about the cost of discipleship. He never alludes to it as easy, in fact, quite the opposite as talks about his own death and calls us to lose our lives for His sake. We've got to take the time and put in the work to go inward and find the ways in which we are denying ourselves a true relationship with God. P.S. If watching Church online every week is not your thing, do not feel bad, relationship with God and the Body of Christ is so many more things. As we journey inward this Lent, it may be harder than in years past; as we have plenty of reasons to be solemn, sober, and vulnerable. However, our journey inward is never done alone. We then will journey outward, outside ourselves to find new life, growth, and beauty through our nurtured relationship with God.

It is in a relationship with God that it is revealed that we are all connected. Although it feels hard to believe. What I love the most about this passage in Mark is it begins with Jesus talking to the disciples and then it shifts to speaking to the crowds. It is that never-ceasing radical inclusion that Jesus is not only calling us to but calling us to do. Regardless of how much you believe in yourself right now, God believes in you, and God believes in us. It is that strange love that will set us free.

Holy One,
your Strange ways,
they astound us.

Among the mighty, your Wisdom is called foolish.
While others assert their power with force,
Yours is extended to us like an invitation.
You never resort to weapons.
Beauty and truth are your means of persuasion.

While empire shouts false promises of security,
using fear to turn us against each other,
You whisper things of vulnerability,
of meals at table,
of forgiveness and new life.

When you, the Sacred, took on flesh,
You sought neither thrones nor prestige,
but made your friends among the outcast.
The sex workers.
The imprisoned.
The hungry and the ill.

Though you were presented with every opportunity
To seek importance among the elite,
to the end, you choose the margins,
making your home among the vulnerable,
living in solidarity with the criminalized and despised.

We long to be strange like you.
Strangers to all that normalizes evil,
to power that corrupts,
to practices that demean or neglect.

Make us faithful to the peculiar calling of Christ.
Unafraid to bear the names of those despised like you.
Firmly planted in the confidence of your Holy Mystery -
the strange love that calls us to endure together,
and always raises hope from the grave.(- Rev. M Barclay, enfleshed.com)