

# Second Sunday in Lent

## SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN

Mark 8:31-38

## Second Sunday in Lent

## Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

1Then 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."

4He 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."

---

## DIAGNOSIS: This Is Plan A

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** : *The Demand Is to*

## *Have a Plan*

Everyone wants to save their life. Going to work is part of our plan for how to save our life, at least for this week. For work will allow us to buy food and shelter and transportation. Well, that plan does not work for everyone. But everyone does want to save their life, to protect it, to nourish it; and even more, protect and nourish the lives of one's children, family, good friends. Each day we make a plan for what we have to do-alarm, bathroom, breakfast, medicine, clothes, get to work, plans for what to do at work or whatever the boss tells us to do, pick up milk on the way home, cook, supper, talk, maybe take kids to this and that, home, a moment of rest, pajamas, bathroom, medicine, brush teeth, go to sleep. We made it through another day. But that is only part of a bigger plan. Soon we will have time to cheer our favorite sports team. This is our time, time for us, time to make life feel good! Yes, whatever day it is, we have plans, schedules, routines, and appointments on the calendar. We are saving our life-saving it from doing nothing, saving it from poverty, saving it from being yelled at for not doing what we are supposed to. Because for some reason, there is a demand made of us that we make something of our life-save it from being nothing. We even, most of us anyway, assume that if we keep to our plan most of the time, we get the reward of heaven.

## **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem)** : *We Trust that Plan*

Not only do we have a plan, we trust that plan. We trust that if our day goes according to plan, we are good, in charge, and that God is good, God is with us, God is watching over us. If the plan for the day gets changed, we go to Plan B for the day. If the plan falls apart, if someone gets sick, has an accident, then the plan has been shot to hell. Nothing is going right for us. God is nowhere in sight. For when the plans go right, God is

right. But when the plans go wrong, God is not being God. Peter in our story thought Jesus was not being his savior with all those plans of suffering, rejection, and being killed (he also paid no attention to “and after three days rise again”). Jesus did not have a good plan. He was not protecting Peter’s life, or anyone else’s. Jesus’ plan was like things going wrong. Peter told Jesus, “Come on, Jesus! Get your act together. Get your head on straight. This is not a plan that does me any good-no good for protecting and preserving my life, which is what I want. You, Jesus, are supposed to be improving my life, making my life great! So no talk of this suffering, rejection, and being killed. That is not a plan any one wants-especially me.” God is rejected when things go wrong-just as Jesus’ plan was rejected by Peter. God is seen as a failure when things go wrong. God cannot be God if bad things happen to us. After all, we have done what we were told to.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) :** *That Plan Did Not Work*

In our self-centered plan making, we have no room for things going wrong. We trust our plans. We trust making our life work, at least to some level of having enough safety and stuff. We trust only a God who makes our plans happen the way we want them to. But we are rebuked by death. Our plans may not have made room for death, but death has plans for us. Death’s plan is to make us into nothing, into dust, where we can no more make plans, for we are no more. God’s alien plan for all creation, holds us accountable for putting our trust in our plans instead of God.

**PROGNOSIS: Go to Plan “C” (for Crucifixion)**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) :** *The Plan that Works*

Since Plan A, the plan of creation, did not go right, it is time

for another plan, Plan C-for crucifixion. Not that anyone likes this plan. Peter refuses it. It is not a plan worthy of a savior or God. But there is no profit in trying to save one's life. Life is always lost to all of us. Yet, amazingly, Jesus, the Son of God ("This is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," Mark 1:1), does not save his life as God, but empties himself and becomes human, becomes trapped in a place where you have to make plans. Jesus is trapped in a place where it is demanded of all to make a plan to save your life, in order to make it to eternal life. It is a trap of our own making. Yet Jesus loses his life for the sake of the gospel. He loses his life for the sake of saving our lives. For after three days Jesus rises again! He lost everything and look! He is risen! Yes, he died, as we all die. But he, he is risen! He has more than death. He has death and then life forever. Now that's a plan!

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) :** *We Trust Jesus*  
Jesus told Peter his plan, but Peter did not like it. Peter did not trust that it would work or that it actually made sense. But Jesus, risen again promises Peter, lose your life for the sake of the gospel, and for the sake of Jesus, that is, trust Jesus, and you will have your life saved by Jesus. Jesus will save your life, not by preventing your death, but by raising you from death. Through Jesus' Promise, through Jesus' Promise offered to us, the Holy Spirit creates trust in Jesus in us. Jesus' Promise replaces the demands made on us. And we gladly surrender those demands with all their empty promises.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *The New Plan Is Mercy*

But with the demands replaced by Jesus' Promise, we are not left with nothing to do. Jesus gives us his plan to use as our plan. Oh, we still have to get up and use the bathroom and make breakfast and go to work. But we carry with us Jesus'-our-new plan. We carry it, that is, we trust it for what makes the day a

good day. We trust we are good because of Jesus. It's a good day because of Jesus, no matter how many things go wrong. If someone fails to do what they were supposed to, we offer forgiveness. If someone's plan to get food fails, we offer a meal. And we carry our plan that Jesus gave us so that, when the plans of other people fail them or our own fail, fail to make them good, fail to make everything go right, fail to keep them in health, safe in their home, with a job, when their plans fail, we offer them Jesus' plan, even though his plan also has failure in it. But it also has one more thing-rising again after three days.