

Second Sunday in Lent, Gospel, Year B

LOST AND FOUND IN LOVE

Mark 8:31-38

Second Sunday in Lent

Analysis by Glenn L. Monson

31 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. 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."

34 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. 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: Lost through Self-Love

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): I Love My Life (and I Want to Keep It!)

I resist the notion that followers of Jesus must lose their

life. I do want to become a follower of Jesus—I really do, but I want to hang onto my life too. Furthermore, I see no harm in gaining a few comforts for myself—maybe not the whole world; but certainly a few trinkets kept on hand are not a threat to Jesus. I know that Jesus was an itinerant preacher, but I’m a settled sort of follower, quite fond of the position, wealth, and wherewithal that the world grants me.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (internal Problem): I Have Faith in Human Things

When you come right down to it, trusting a few promises of Jesus like “when you lose your life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, you will save it” is risky in my estimation. It’s a lot easier for me to trust things I can touch and store up—human things. It’s easier to trust a fat bank account than a heavenly one, and it’s easier to believe in the favor of people I can actually see than the One I can’t see. The world is something I am familiar with; setting my mind on the things of this world makes sense to me.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): The Self I Love Is Mortal, Fleeting, Dying

Being intent upon securing those things that are passing away I have fallen prey to Satan’s lie that these things will save me. I have made stones into bread, thrown myself off the temple, and worshipped the Evil One, only to find out that Satan is the father of lies. I thought I could hold onto my life by grasping it more tightly only to find out that it has slipped between my fingers. All that I have loved and trusted is passing away and I am lost.

PROGNOSIS: Found through God’s Love

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus Loses His Life So That We Might Gain Ours

Jesus has done what I could not do: he has denied himself, taken up the cross, and followed the will of the Father all the way to the Cross. Jesus has done what is necessary in order for the world to be saved. Jesus has set his mind only on divine things, not ashamed to call us "beloved." Because of God's love shown to us through Christ, the glory of the Father has been granted to Christ, and all we can do is give thanks and praise to this One who lost his life so that we might gain ours.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): I Have Faith in Christ

Compelled by God's love shown in Christ, and having seen the dead end of self-love, the focus of my life becomes the gospel. I have died and been raised to new life in Christ. The life I feared losing I no longer hold onto. Now I hold onto Christ alone, and am not ashamed to call him my life and salvation.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Daily Dying Is Now My Pattern

All those things that I formerly was so enamored with have lost their appeal. Satan's lies no longer have power over me. The things of this world are not worthy of my love; only Christ is. Instead of holding on tightly to my life, I share it freely with others, through giving, serving, and acts of compassion. There is nothing I desire besides Christ. By God's grace I am a follower of Christ.