Rooted: Self-Denial

Mark 8: 31-38

022821

**Lent**: “Rooted-Faithful Practices for Following Jesus”

**Roots**: Thinking about how tree roots resemble our spiritual roots/foundations

* **Anchor, Nourish, Reveal**
* **Anchor** -- keeps from drifting, being blown by the wind, and facing the wrong direction
* **Nourish** -- keeps the tree receiving what it needs to thrive
	+ **Reveal** -- What happens sub-surface is eventually evident on the surface

**This sermon is about self-denial…**

The topic of Self-Denial is to **preaching** what a terrible pick up line is to a **date**.

* It’s over before it ever starts.
* **[Terrible Pick-up lines]**
	+ Do you believe in love at first sight? Or should I walk past you again?
	+ I'm learning about important dates in history. Wanna be one of them?
	+ I seem to have lost my phone number. Can I have yours?
	+ Well, here I am. What are your *other* two wishes for the genie?

**A sermon on self-denial is over before it starts…**

Someone here may say, “I’m giving up self-denial for Lent.”

* **We can’t be in denial about self-denial!**
* **We cannot claim to follow Jesus and reject self-denial.**

(Read Mark 8: 31-38, on screen)

I. Jesus knew that his life would be marked by rejection, suffering, and death.

* Jesus **shared** this with his disciples (including the idea of resurrection) but the disciples **could not hear it.**
* It was beyond their comprehension to imagine a Messiah who would be killed.
* **Peter rebukes Jesus.**
* This is strong language. The same word is used here that Jesus used when speaking to demons.

II. Jesus tells Peter that he has in mind the concerns of humanity.

* **Jesus is asking him to prioritize the concerns of God.**
* What’s going on with Peter that he cannot see what Jesus is really all about?
* Peter might turn that question right back around on us, what is going on with us?
* **This is, isn’t it, the call to the believer today: to prioritize the concerns of God over the concerns of humanity.**
* But we really aren’t very good at this.
* **Our humanity, like the disciples, like the Israelites before them, is quite often in our way.**
* Too often, the **grip of normalcy or comfort** **or control** gets in the way of our growth in Christ.

III. This lack of growth hinders us from engaging fully in the work of God in the world.

* **We go through life just like everyone else and that isn’t Jesus’ plan for us.**
* Jesus saves us because **he loves.**
* **And he loves so much that your salvation is a part of the salvation of those who are around you.**
* **It isn’t just about you.**
* There is a fundamental misunderstanding of what Jesus is really about.
* **The problem seems to be a framework for understanding that is narrowed by human desires for comfort, control, and power.**
* **[spiritual plaque]**

IV. Jesus calls Peter on this, but we all feel the pain, don’t we?

* Like Peter, **we want Jesus to line up with our image of who we want him to be.**
* We tend to **make Jesus in our own image**, with our own ideals, rather than receive Jesus as Jesus truly was.
* Jesus then announces to the disciples and others that following him **will not be** along the expected route of pleasure, power, and position.
* Rather, following Jesus means that **we accept Jesus as a suffering Savior…even if it requires some suffering on our part.**

**[Suffering will come. It is inevitable.]**

There is suffering **you choose** and suffering that **is placed upon your** shoulders.

**The suffering we choose, however, can prepare us to handle the suffering that is placed upon our shoulders.**

V. So, how do we address the tendency in ourselves to make Jesus in our own image?

* How do we address the tendency to want the blessings but not the suffering?
* How do we prepare ourselves for faithful following?
* Voluntary Suffering, Taking up our cross, Self-denial.

* + **34**Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny themselves** and take up their cross and follow me.

Today, in this season of Lent…**Specifically—fasting.**

* Voluntary Suffering Now **strengthens** us for whatever may come.
* Voluntary Suffering now **helps us to identify** with Jesus’ sufferings
* Voluntary Suffering now **breaks the grip** of comfort and opens us up to new growth
* Voluntary Suffering **sensitizes** us to our need for Jesus’ help
* Like Jesus’ victory in death, Voluntary Suffering **enables us** to experience that when we are weak, we are truly strong…in Jesus.

Fasting: Make a dietary choice that leaves you feeling unfulfilled.

* Fast a snack, a meal, a day, all week, even more
* Give up something that is a staple to you [coffee, chocolate, carbs, soda, chips, pizza, sweets, etc…] anything that you will “feel” the loss of.
* Give it up long enough that it matters to you. Very individualized.
* When you feel that “pain” pray this:

* + “Jesus, you suffered for me and I am thankful.
	+ You call me to accept suffering as I follow you.
	+ As I feel this discomfort, help me to rely on you.
* Pre-determine when your fast will end.
* When it is over, celebrate and rejoice in what you’ve learned.

**Here is how to encourage one another this week as we take this journey together:**

* On Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter you will see this image [show image]. When you see it, if you are on the Lent journey with us, “like” it, comment on it, or share it to your page.



Prayer

Song—Fresh Wind

Benediction --

