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Mark 8:27-38
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Do you think Jesus was a little harsh with Peter?

- I mean after all -

- only moments before he was doing so very well.

- Jesus asked the question -

- “Who do people say that I am?”

- and he got the type of responses he probably expected -

- John the Baptist -

- Elijah -

- a prophet -

- and then Jesus asks -

- “But who do you say that I am?”

- Who do you -

- my disciples, my friends,

- those closest to me - - -

- what do you see when you look at me? -

- and Peter jumps right in -

- Peter is bold enough to say aloud -

- what the others may well have been thinking -

- “You are the Messiah” -

-Now from our prospective -

- that’s not such a surprising statement -

- after all -

- for us -

- Jesus has always been the Messiah, - -

- but for the people around Jesus -

- this was a bold and potentially controversial statement.

- Jesus doesn’t necessarily fit the expected mold -

- he’s not kingly -

- in a traditional sense -

- he doesn’t have an army -

- or great wealth. -

- On the surface,

- he doesn’t seem like the guy

- to return Israel to glory, -

- but Peter sees what others are missing.

- He knows Jesus is special -

- knows Jesus isn’t just another teacher -

- or prophet -

- And so he proclaims it boldly -

- “You are the Messiah”
 - you are the chosen one -
 - you are the one who will redeem God’s people -
 - you are the one who will make all things new. -
- It’s an amazing profession of faith -
 - it’s an brilliant insight on Peter’s part -
 - and I imagine he expected high praise -
 - or at the very least a sincere - ‘Well done!’
- But instead Jesus makes it clear that
 - although Peter may have gotten the answer correct -
 - the world isn’t quite ready for that news to be public -
 - so Jesus instructs Peter and the others to keep that news to themselves -
 - because -
 - as Jesus quickly makes clear -
 - he is not going to be the Messiah that the people expect -
- Jesus “began to teach them” Mark says,
 - “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.” (Mk 8:31)
- Clearly this is more than Peter can take, - -

- Peter looks at Jesus and he sees a triumphant savior -
- Peter sees a servant of God who is healing the sick -
- who is feeding the hungry -
- In Peter's eyes,
- Jesus will be praised by the people
- not killed by them -
- Jesus will rule an earthly kingdom -
- not be buried by one -
- Jesus will teach the religious leaders -
- not be rejected by them -
- And Peter just can't keep his feelings to himself, -
- so he pulls Jesus aside and says something -
- something I'm sure he thought would knock some sense -
- into Jesus -
- something that he thought would help Jesus -
- see the glorious future Peter expected -
- something designed to remind Jesus -
- exactly who he was and what he could do -
- And that's when it happens -
- that's when Jesus reminds Peter
- that sometimes it's possible to get the right answer -

- and have very little understanding
 - of exactly how you got there.
- Jesus turns to the disciples,
 - looks at Peter and says
 - “Get behind me, Satan!”
- Now his words may seem harsh -
 - especially given how well Peter was doing just a moment before, -
 - but Jesus wants Peter -
 - needs Peter and the disciples to understand -
 - what it means for him to be the Messiah -
 - Jesus needs them to see -
 - that God sent Jesus to restore God’s people -
 - to change the relationship
 - between God and God’s people forever
 - needs them to know -
 - that the path he is on -
 - and by extension -
 - the path they are on, if
 - they follow him,
 - is not easy -
 - it won’t make them rich -

- and it isn't going to put them

- at the top of society -

- in fact Jesus says -

“If any want to become my followers,

- let them deny themselves and take up their cross

- and follow me.” (Mk 8:34)

- God's mission to love and bless and save the world -

- is a mission that requires sacrifice -

- and strength -

- and a willingness to let go

- of earthly standards for success.

- The mission Jesus is on -

- to save God's people -

- the mission Jesus invites us to participate in

- requires the first to be last -

- invites the highest to serve the lowly -

- means that a new life comes from death.

- To be the Messiah -

- to follow the Messiah -

- isn't a glamorous rock star life, -

- but it is a life that makes a difference -

- it is a life built upon hope
- it is a life centered on God's love for God's people
- Now given how radically different,
 - Jesus' understanding of what it means to be the Messiah
 - is from the traditional understanding, -
- perhaps Jesus could have been a little more understanding of Peter's confusion-
 - could have corrected Peter in a kinder, gentler way -
 - but as you heard, he didn't
 - and in fact, I think Jesus chose his words very intentionally -
 - because by referencing Satan,
 - he makes it clear that Peter is falling prey
 - to the very temptation
 - that Jesus rejected in the wilderness
 - the temptation
 - to place yourself and your interests
 - above all else - even God.
- Peter, it seems to me,
 - is so focused on preserving Jesus' life-
 - on keeping the ministry going -
 - on enjoying the things of this world -
 - that he is missing the bigger picture -

- Oh- of course Peter doesn't want Jesus
 - to be rejected,
 - to suffer,
 - and to die -
 - who wants that for their friend -
- But, Jesus says -
 - that is exactly what God's chosen one,
 - what the Messiah
 - is called to do
 - to repair the brokenness of the world -
 - to give us the promise of eternal life with God -
 - for by willingly laying down his life -
 - by choosing to sacrifice himself, -
 - the Messiah will change and save the whole world -
 - one life given for the salvation of many -
- In that moment,
 - Peter represents all those temptations that pull Jesus -
 - that pull us away from doing what God's calls us to do -
 - from being who God calls us to be -
 - and as he did in the wilderness following his baptism-
 - Jesus rejects this temptation -

- puts it behind him

- and moves ahead with his mission

- to love, bless and save

- the world.

- Jesus' mission -

- our mission as followers of Jesus isn't easy -

- but when we,

- like Jesus,

- are willing to embrace God's love for the world, -

- willing to serve others, -

- instead of only wanted to be served,

- then we will be able to recognize Jesus as the Messiah -

- and embrace that good news that

- that through his presence in the world,

- you and I and all of God's people

- are given the promise of eternal life -

- and the guidance we need

- to live a balanced,

- healthy, meaningful life in the world

- serving God

- and helping our neighbor.