

2/25/2018

## “Why Then is It Written ...?”

Scripture: Mark 9:9-13

Lenten Series: Questions Along the Way

Second Sunday in Lent

**Theme: Jesus points out his identification of himself with the Suffering Servant prophesied by Isaiah, and again alludes to his eventual suffering and death to establish God’s kingdom on earth.**

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Today we continue our Lenten sermon series of Questions Along the Way from the Mount of Transfiguration to Jerusalem.

Mark’s gospel (9:9-13) says:

*<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant. <sup>11</sup> And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the (holy) law say that Elijah (the prophet) must come first?”*

*<sup>12</sup> Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written (in the scriptures) that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? <sup>13</sup> But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”*

Notice first, Jesus began with an injunction. The disciples must tell no one of what they had seen. Jesus knew quite well that their minds were still filled with the idea of a Messiah of power and might, who would rule upon the earth over the nations. It came from the common belief of the Jewish people in the return of the prophet Elijah before the coming Messiah and the restoration of Israel. Malachi (3:1) had proclaimed the word of the Lord:

***“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.***

And later his words were recorded (4:5-6):

***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”***

Why would Jesus tell them not to tell anyone else yet? And what did he mean by the Son of Man rising from the dead? So they discussed these things among themselves.

And when they asked him about Elijah coming, Jesus assures them that Elijah has already come (as John the Baptist). Or, perhaps more correctly, that John the Baptist came in the prophetic spirit of Elijah. As Jesus explained, he did so “*to restore all things*” as it was written about

him.

Then Jesus asks the question of the day. . .

† **Jesus said, “*Why then (or “How then” as some translations have it) is it written (in the scriptures) that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?*”**

How and why indeed?! How could his own people reject and persecute both Elijah and the Son of Man – Jesus the Messiah, the Christ?

**Jesus identifies himself with the Suffering Servant as prophesied by Isaiah** (in what are now the 52<sup>nd</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> chapters). At times, this figure can be identified with the faithful of the nation of Israel. But, many early believers, including Matthew (12:15-21) and Phillip (Acts 8:31-34; Is. 53:7, 8) understood Jesus to be the greater fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies of the Suffering Servant.

**By asking this question, Jesus again alludes to his eventual suffering and death to fully establish God’s kingdom on earth.** He had stated it plainly just days before ascending the mountain. As Mark had earlier recorded (8:31-36):

<sup>31</sup> *He . . . began to teach them that **the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected . . . , and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.***

<sup>32</sup> *And after Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from God’s plan,* <sup>33</sup> *Jesus rebuked Satan who was speaking through Peter.*

<sup>34</sup> *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**”* <sup>35</sup> *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.* <sup>36</sup> *What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”*

**As we look back upon the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we know why those words of prophecy were written. They were written, because they were part of God’s loving plan of salvation.** Their fulfillment would bring the kingdom of God on earth to greater realization.

We, too, may wonder why there is so much senseless suffering in our world today. Even good people suffer in one way or another. Sometimes that suffering is from illness or hardship, the loss of a loved one, and sometimes it is even to death, even suddenly, as we witnessed in Florida this past Valentine’s Day. And so many more in places like Syria, where civil war and radical religious extremists have led to hundreds of thousands now dead, while suffering continues every day.

As we seek to make sense of it all, and to hold onto hope, let’s hear the witness of Tony Dungy, a former professional American football player and coach in the National Football League (NFL). Dungy became the first black head coach to win the Super Bowl when his Colts defeated the Chicago Bears in Super Bowl XLI.[Wikipedia] Perhaps more important than all of his success, are the lessons he has learned about faith in God through Jesus Christ.

This is from a 2006 interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3PUPCR7NFA>

† **The cross and the crown. The grave and eternal life. Will you take up your cross and**

**follow him?**

Whatever cross you bear, know that Jesus bore his before you! Whatever cross you bear, believe that Jesus is with you through the Holy Spirit! Whatever cross you bear, know that there is hope for a new day here on earth and eternal life to come!

Let us use the opportunities we have in the weeks ahead, to share God's love and mercy with others. (You can use today's sermon notes for reflection and ways you will respond.)

**This is where Jesus, and we, are headed through the Season of Lent**, while acknowledging its fulfillment already – and Christ's **victory** in the Resurrection. Let us give thanks and follow Christ together!