

Sermon 2009 Confession of St. Peter
Text: Mark 8:27 – 9:1
Title: "Ready or Not Here God Comes"

Talking about Christianity and being Christian is easy. Even confessing faith in Christ is not really all that hard. We all have the Creed pretty much memorized right? That's how Peter was too.

He had walked with Jesus for several years. He had seen good times and bad times but all in all they had sailed right along until Jesus started talking about this business of being crucified! "You are the Christ!" Yea Peter! Preach it brother!

Then we hear Jesus say, "Get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Whoa! What happened to our hero, Peter? Suddenly when confessing the Lord meant everything going sideways for him, Peter was rebuking the Lord instead of confessing him.

We do the same thing. The Lord says to me; "forgive" and I say,

"I'll forgive when he repents!"

“I’ll forgive but I can’t forget.”

“I’ll forgive, but I’ll never speak to her again.”

And Jesus looks at us and says;

“Get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

The Lord says to us; “give,” and we say,

“Well Lord I have to take care of the Visa bill first and then I’ll give.”

“I’ll give Lord but I’m not sacrificing my daily \$10 lunch out just to support your ministry.”

“I’ll give Lord but you can’t expect me to sacrifice my retirement plans for your ministry.”

And Jesus looks us dead in the eye and says;

“Get behind me Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

When it gets down to actions, following Christ is really hard. As long as it is an idea, we are fine with it, but faith in Christ quickly moves from the idea realm into the action realm and we often balk when that happens.

Following Christ means finding the strength in his Word and his Body and Blood to believe that he will walk with you through the fire and preserve your life even while you feel the flames licking at your feet. Following Christ does **not** mean that we suffer no hardship because of our sins. When we make a mess, we still get to clean it up, but at least Christ is on his hands and knees beside us as we clean. Following Christ does **not** mean that we suffer no hardship because of other people's sin. Sometimes the sins of others hurt us, but it is so freeing to know that we are not responsible for judging them, punishing them or even accusing them. Christ stands beside us and promises to take care of everything so that we are free to forgive them.

Following Christ is no picnic and anyone who thinks it is has not crossed the desert yet. Sooner or later everyone seems to hit the wilderness and that is when we first learn the cost of discipleship. Then, just when we think we have crossed the desert and it is all over, we find out that there are levels of wilderness that are progressively more challenging. Sometimes it feels as though we are caught in some kind of weird, never

ending video game where every day we must conquer a whole new set of demons or die.

And I guess that really is it in the end. The hard news is that we never get to be finished in this life and just put our feet up and relax. No matter how much we have grown, there is more growing to do and God is never satisfied with immature fruit. He will constantly push us and push us and push us to produce bigger, better, healthier fruit. And we cry and moan and throw a fit because we think it is too hard to do or we refuse to abandon our pride and God patiently waits. He can always outwait us because what's time to him? He invented time. Sooner or later we will break and we will break one way or the other.

Eitherr we come out rejecting God for being too hard and too demanding or we will come out of our desert with a new found conviction that God is all and is in all and we are therefore unstoppable. AMEN.