

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." 30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

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. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But 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. 35 For 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. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those 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."

How big are your dreams?

Do you dream of some extra money in the bank - a thousand, two thousand, a hundred thousand?

Do you dream of honors for yourself, your children? A starring role in the state championship game? A record year at work? Graduating at the top of the class?

How big are your dreams?

A vacation at an exclusive Caribbean resort? A trip around the world? A summer in Europe with your friends?

How big are your dreams? A cure for the cancer that threatens to take one you love? A respite from the daily pain of arthritis? A cure for Alzheimers?

That you would look more attractive?

How big are your dreams?

The dream of the Jewish people was big indeed. They dreamed of the Messiah whose coming would make the mountains and hills burst into song - the deserts bloom as a garden! When the Messiah came the lion would lie down with the lamb, the nations would all run to Israel, bow down to the God of Israel. When the Messiah came

God's people would be honored, their enemies brought low. Violence would no more be heard in their land. God had promised, "I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age."

Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

Peter whose eyes had seen Jesus cast out demons and raise a girl from the dead, Peter who had witnessed Jesus giving sight to the blind and stilling the storm and walking on water and feeding thousands with a few loaves and fish, now Peter confessed, "You are the Messiah."

The dream had come true. Any moment now the power of every enemy would be broken, and God's people would never again live in fear. Any moment now Jesus would lead the whole people of Israel to a victory long promised by God. Any moment now.....

But before the dreaming could even get into high gear Jesus sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

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. He said all this quite openly.

This was not part of the script. Glory and victory and honor for God's people were in the Messiah script - not great suffering, rejection, being killed, and three days of waiting for resurrection.

Peter would set Jesus straight; he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him. As Jesus had rebuked the demons, and rebuked the storm at sea, now Peter rebuked Jesus. *But turning and looking at his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter, "Get behind me, Satan, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."*

God's way in God's Messiah would not be the crushing of enemies, but the yielding to the enemies will. The very shame and suffering and death that the enemies had so long heaped upon the Jewish people would now be heaped on their Messiah.

The Lord had spoken through Isaiah so long ago: *My thoughts are not your thoughts nor are my ways your ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

God's victory was coming through the cross – in a way that was part of no one's dream. To suffer, to lose, to die and to wait for God, even for God's own Messiah this would be the path in this world.

Jesus called the crowd – not just the disciples but all of us – and this is what he said, *“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow me. For 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.*

God's dream for you is Jesus - that you would be like him and with him and live for him. God's dream for you is Jesus who loved you more than his own life, who endured the suffering and the rejection and the dying for you that through his losing his life you might live forever.

God's dream for you is Jesus. Jesus is the pearl of great price; Jesus is the inheritance that will really take care of your children's future. Not a name for yourself, nor wealth nor power, but faith in Jesus is the treasure worthy of all your devotion, and all your days and your deeds.

“Be like me,” says Jesus “Follow. Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.”

For wherever Jesus leads you, God is there - waiting.