

## Sermon Series: "We Gon' Be Alright"

Date: April 4, 2022

Scripture: Mark 8:27-38 (spotlight on Mark 8:33)

### Passage Background & Summary

Today's scripture takes place in the midst of Jesus's ministry. In verses prior, Jesus feeds the four thousand and heals a blind man. Thus, the disciples have witnessed the miracles of Jesus. The passage for today begins with their arrival in "the villages of Caesarea Philippi" (v. 27). Jesus asks his disciples the question: "Who do people say that I am?" (v. 27). They respond with answers including John the Baptist, Elijah and the prophets, and Jesus follows their responses up with a more personal question: "But who do you say that I am?" (v. 28-29). They reply, "You are the Messiah" (v. 29). Similar to his requests of the man who is blind who has recently healed, he asks that they not "tell anyone about him" (v. 30). Next, Jesus teaches them of what is to come as it relates to the suffering he will undergo, his betrayal, his death, and his resurrection (v. 31). Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes him, and Jesus rebukes Peter in turn stating, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." He continues speaking to the disciples and calls the crowd to witness as well as he shares the way to become followers: denying themselves, taking up their crosses, and following him (v. 34). They must be willing to give of themselves and be unashamed for if they are ashamed, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of them (v. 35-38).

### Sermon Notes

For this Lenten season, we will be diving into a sermon series entitled "We Gon' Be Alright" as inspired by the song by Kendrick Lamar. In the song, Kendrick Lamar tells the story of a harsh reality, yet in the midst of darkness, death, and despair in the music video, he smiles and says, "We Gon' Be Alright." This song is an affirmation that racism, bigotry, hatred, and other ideologies will not have the last word. To us, this song speaks to the Easter message in a Good Friday world. It speaks to the resurrection in a world of darkness. In a real sense, the message of Lent is to invite us to confront the chaos of the human condition. We have to go through Lent and walk through all the stations of the cross to get to the resurrection. Like the song, we have to think "We Gon' Be Alright."

"We Gon' Be Alright," is the message that Jesus is communicating to his disciples in the scripture for today. He's trying to challenge and change the way the disciples think. Jesus is trying to renew their minds so that they can follow him and love and live with the knowledge that God has the last word. When Jesus asks the disciples who they say that he is, Peter says, "You are the Messiah." It is an affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christos, the Anointed One, the one they have been waiting for. Peter says this in a place that has been a sight of worship for other gods; it is a place where temples are built to mortals and people bow down to the false gods of the culture. Every culture has its gods: violence, pride, egotism, selfishness, greed, bigotry. Make sure you don't turn your life into a temple made for yourself.

Later Jesus says, "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" (v. 35). To sum it up, if you want your life to mean something, give it over to something larger than yourself. Now, Peter and the disciples would have a certain understanding of the Messiah, and Jesus challenges that. The Messiah is supposed to be this

great ruler that rises high above others. Yet, Jesus speaks of a Messiah that will undergo great suffering, be killed, and rise again. How can he save others if he will not save himself? This is a God acquainted with sorrow and grief. Peter rebukes this, and Jesus in turn rebukes him. Jesus is trying to turn their world upside down: This message is intuitive and countercultural. We may view this message the same way today. We get caught up in a prosperity gospel message that promises we won't get sick or go through suffering, yet this message cannot sustain us in a pandemic where grief, suffering, loss, sorrow, and death is all around. We need a message that speaks to God's presence even amid pain a suffering. We need something about a power made perfect in weakness. We need a message that affirms that with God, "We Gon' Be Alright." God extends us grace when we aren't perfect, and God uses the poor, the despised, the marginalized, and the rejected. We can trust that God will redeem us and that with God, we will overcome. God, help us every day to choose Christ over culture. To choose the cross over ourselves. Jesus is our redeemer, light in the darkness, friend in the midnight hour, and so much more. We can trust that in the midst of all we may be going through, with God "We Gon' Be Alright."

### Reflection Questions

1. What experiences do you need to sit in and reflect on this Lenten season before you can get to the cross?
2. Have you ever felt like Peter? Have you ever rebuked the presence of suffering in your life?
3. What would God say about the gods of this culture? For example, when faced with selfishness, how might God invite us to respond?
4. What is Jesus asking of us in saying, "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"?
5. Have you ever been let down by a prosperity gospel message?
6. How do we choose Christ over culture?