

# WHAT DID I DO?

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ September 11, 2016



Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” 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. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. (Mark 8:27-35)

This is the day the Lord has made, so let us rejoice and be glad in it,

You've heard of the book, “*Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus*,” right? This is one of the most famous books written to describe the differences between men and women. Even though I haven't read that book cover to cover, it's fascinating to me how differently men and women think. For example, most women when asked, “how's it going?” would respond with some answer about a relationship in their life, while when men are asked the same question, most will respond with something they've done recently.

So it's no wonder, since men and women think so differently, that there's bound to be some miscommunication. One lesson I've had to learn is when my wife has shared with me a problem or a difficulty in her life. My first reaction as a guy is to come up with a solution to fix the problem, and I've tended to share with her that fix. Only, she isn't as excited by the solution as I am. It leads me to wonder “WHAT DID I DO?” What I've learned, is that she isn't looking for me to solve her problem, but rather just to listen and be there for her.

If there's a communication gap that happens between couples in a relationship, then it should come as no surprise that there's communication gaps that can happen between us and our God. It's a communication gap that even happened with one of Jesus' closest disciples – Peter – in our gospel for this morning. If a communication gap can happen between Peter and Jesus, you bet it could happen between you and God. A question that Peter must've been asking himself, and a question that we too must ask is: WHAT DID I DO?

1. To disappoint my God
2. To deny myself

We must ask ourselves this question, because it would be foolish to think that everything's OK, when it's really not. We must ask ourselves this question, because it reminds us of what makes a Christian different. And so we turn to the gospel of Mark, and we will follow the journey of Jesus over the next several weeks as he prepared his disciples, and us, of what was to come and to teach his disciples how to respond.

It was when Jesus was in the northern part of Israel, away from the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem, the religious center of the Jews. It was there that Jesus asked his disciples, **"Who do people say I am?"** It wasn't as if Jesus didn't know what people were saying about him. But he wanted his disciples to think, and come up with the right answer for themselves. **"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."** **"But what about you," he asked, "who do you say I am?"**

**"You are the Christ!"** Peter exclaimed, and he was right. But what did that mean, and why is it important to recognize Jesus as the Christ? First of all, we often say "Jesus Christ" as if "Christ" was Jesus' last name, it wasn't. "Christ" was a title, a title for a very special person God had promised since all the way back in the Garden of Eden. There would only be one, and so it was significant that Peter identified Jesus as the Christ.

The purpose of the Christ was to save the world. John the Baptist when he saw Jesus shouted, **"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** This is what Peter was confessing about his teacher, he was confessing that this Jesus is the one whom God sent to save him. And Jesus commended Peter for this answer, but in the next breath, he said "Don't tell anyone me." That seems a little strange. Why wouldn't Jesus want people to know that he is the Savior of the world? The short answer is that many people didn't understand what that mission would require, and would unknowingly, in their misunderstood idea of the Messiah, seek to thwart his mission.

That's exactly what happened with Peter. Jesus began to teach his disciples about the mission of the Christ, what would happen to the Christ – he would suffer, he would be rejected, and he would die. Then the same person that confessed Jesus to be the Christ took him aside and said, "You can't talk that, that's not what's supposed to happen to you, you don't deserve to have that happen to you." Then Peter had one of those, "WHAT DID I DO?" moments, as Jesus looked him squarely in the eye and said with a stern face, **"Get behind me, Satan!"**

"WHAT DID I DO?" Peter must have been asking himself, "all I wanted was for Jesus to be safe, for Jesus to avoid any unnecessary pain and suffering." Jesus' seriousness is conveyed not by saying, "Aww, that's nice Peter, but it can't happen that way," but rather **"Get behind me Satan!"** He explained why he used such strong language when he said, **"You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."**

Now, did Peter have any bad intentions in suggesting to Jesus that he not go to Jerusalem to suffer and die? Of course not. But as innocent as his intentions were, his suggestions would have had horrific consequences. Just think for a moment what would have happened if Jesus would've taken Peter's advice. Jesus could've avoided Jerusalem entirely, then he wouldn't have been captured by the religious leaders in Gethsemane, he could've avoided them in northern Israel and continued

to teach and preach, he could've enjoyed spending time with his disciples, and that would have been that. What's missing? Jesus saving the world by dying on the cross. Because that's what your sins and mine demanded. No amount of teaching and no amount of preaching could have made up for Jesus not going to the cross to die for our sins.

And you know the scary part about this account? It's possible for us to act this way too. Not only is it possible, but I'm pretty sure we have acted like Peter before. We act like Peter when we have in mind the things of men and not the things of God. Just think how often we've thought about life from the perspective of what makes me happy, instead of what God says about marriage, about anger, about worrying. How often have we thought lightly of that addiction or habit that we would be so embarrassed to have others find out about? How often have we thought if only more people would come to church, if only we would have the right leaders then this country would be fine. How often have we expected and sometimes demanded the life of a Christian be more respected, that we be praised for our counter cultural views?

When I ask myself the question, "WHAT DID I DO to disappoint my God?" there's a laundry list that would encircle the earth of what I have done. But not only is it what I've done to disappoint my God, but it's who I am. I don't just commit sins, I am a sinner, sinful from conception. As such, it's not so much what have I done to disappoint God, but what haven't I done. If Jesus were standing before me today, how often would he have to tell me, "Get behind me Satan!"?

But those are words that I need to hear at those times, to remind me that I don't have in mind the things of God but the things of men. It's those times that I must be reminded that the path Christ took was not an easy one. He did have to suffer, he did have to be rejected, he did have to be nailed to a cross. He did all of that for me. For all of the times I have disappointed my God, for all of the times I have tried to make God say something he never said. But, "**when we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**"

But he didn't just die. He rose again. This was something he spoke very clearly about before his death, but Peter and the rest of the disciples couldn't get over the fact that Jesus was going to die. He rose again as our guarantee that he has won, as a guarantee that the times we have disappointed our God have been wiped away forever, never to bother us again. His guarantee changes our life and changes our question. Instead of asking, "WHAT DID I DO?", we ask "WHAT DO I DO?"

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"WHAT DO I DO to deny myself and follow him? Jesus went on to explain to the crowd that "**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**" There has been much ink spilled on explaining these two verses about what they mean, but let us content ourselves with this – denying self.

Denying self is not something natural, whether you're a Christian or not. Denying self goes against our very grain of self-gratification. Yet it's not something that Christ gives as a suggestion for a Christian who wants to be a better Christian. He says this is what a Christian will do, this is what a Christian will strive to do. And so for instance, when that moment arises to indulge that sinful

addiction – whether it be pornography, gossiping, impatience, or anything else, we are called to deny that pleasure, and follow Christ.

Self-denial does not only apply in sinful matters, but in all matters of our life. We deny ourselves when we choose to give a generous portion of our hard earned income to support the work of God's Church. We deny ourselves, when we choose to come to God's house of worship instead of watching pregame and kickoff to the early NFL games. We deny ourselves when we set aside time for study in God's Word through Bible classes and devotions. All of these actions do not make us a Christian, but a Christian makes these actions.

What is the benefit in living in this way? What is the benefit behind denying self and following Christ? Jesus sums it up perfectly with the last words of our gospel for this morning, **"whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."** If we were to just live for ourselves, doing whatever we thought was good, doing whatever pleased us and made us happy, our life would be pretty great...until we died. But if we live a life of self-denial, if we as a result of that self-denial face the ridicule of others, if we are rejected for preaching the gospel we will still die...but then we will be raised to life again to be with God in heaven.

If you really believe that what you believe is true, then how can you not deny yourself? You have a God who denied himself for you so you no longer need to ask the terrifying question of WHAT DID I DO? But you can rather ask the question of "what can I do?" May God give you the strength not only to listen to his Christ, but to deny yourself and follow in his footsteps. Amen.