

**“Winning and Losing”**  
Message by DD Adams  
Providence Kemptown U.M. Church  
17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
September 16, 2018

The gospel lesson is taken from Mark, chapter 8, verses 27 through 38. Jesus and his disciples went into the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” <sup>28</sup>They told him, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets.”

<sup>29</sup>He asked them, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” <sup>30</sup>Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about him. <sup>31</sup>Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Human One must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead.” <sup>32</sup>[Jesus] said this plainly.

But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him. <sup>33</sup>Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: “Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

<sup>34</sup>After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup>All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. <sup>36</sup>Why would

people gain the whole world but lose their lives? <sup>37</sup>What will people give in exchange for their lives?

<sup>38</sup>Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father's glory with the holy angels." This is God's word for God's people.

Please pray with me. Holy God of relational love who calls us right in the midst of life's challenges. We pray for a glimpse of you this morning. We pray for your light to renew our minds. For it's you Lord, the Messiah, who calls us out of darkness and into your heavenly light. Move in us today, and may the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

In Mark's gospel by this time Jesus has done many miracles. He healed the sick, made the blind see, exorcised demons, fed over 9,000 with a couple loaves and a few fish, made a deaf man hear and speak, walked on water, calmed gale-force winds and spoke to Mother Nature silencing her! Surely the disciples thought –this man can do anything! Jesus! What a winner!

Perhaps Jesus heard their thinking and saw their reactions to things that were beyond the normal range of human experience. So he asks them, "Who do people say that I am?" They told him, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets."

Jesus asked them, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” Peter believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

Jesus was that winner that everyone looks up to, but then, Jesus tells the disciples what will happen to him. Jesus said he’d suffer and be rejected by his own people, they would plan his death, he’d be killed, and after three days he’d rise from the dead. Now hold on—that’s not my idea of winning!

So Peter takes control of the situation and argues with Jesus! Peter grabs Jesus and corrects and scolds him! Then Jesus tells Peter, “You are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.” Things like—winners don’t suffer. Winners stay on the top. They don’t let others get the upper hand. They stay in control.

When Jesus tells the disciples about his imminent death, it sounds like Jesus accepts the defeat of rejection and being killed; this isn’t exactly what the disciples would call excellent performance! What happened to doing miracles that would fix all of life’s confusion? This isn’t winning! This is worse than being a loser!

The disciples wanted things in their world “fixed.” They wanted Jesus to restore Israel’s power and control among the nations. They wanted him to bring peace into their world of confusion. Jesus knew the way, and it wasn’t their way. Jesus’ way was the giving of his life in a sacrificial love.

The disciples imagined a world very different than what Jesus said. They saw Jesus as one with great strength and power, but Jesus didn’t intend to use it in

the way they thought he would. Instead of using his strength and power, he used his vulnerability and love through the giving of his body as a sacrificial offering.

They interpreted Jesus' miraculous acts as demonstrations of power rather than manifestations of love. And when Jesus describes the greatest act of love through the giving of his life for them and for the world—well—they didn't get it. They can't see this as winning, and neither can we most of the time.

It is really challenging to hold on to this concept through hard times. We have the concept in our minds, but it's hard to embrace when things get confusing and don't seem to get fixed as we'd like. What a paradox Jesus presents to us because we want to follow him, but why all the confusion Lord?

I can hear the disciples thinking. "So Jesus, you mean that with *all this power and miracle working ability* you're going to let yourself be killed?" You're not going to defend yourself? To our thinking this is logically unacceptable and self-contradictory to who and what Jesus is and what we know he can do!

Jesus is interested in the big picture. He knows what we need. His thinking is higher and his love is deeper for us than we could ever imagine. Peter had the right answer concerning Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, but Peter's answer was for the wrong reason. In this verse Jesus states, "All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them."

THIS is the big picture. Lose your life of selfishness and self-sufficiency and release your life to Christ. Begin by serving others. Take up your cross means to die to yourself. Die to what *you* want, what *you* expect from life, and what the peanut gallery says you deserve.

Our definition of winning and losing is misused as a follower of Christ. Let's start doing things God's way. Give yourself, your money, your time, and your talent, because in the end you can't keep it. Why would we want to gain the whole world but lose our lives? Only God can give you what you really want and need. So go for it. Make a change, and give away your life so you can save it.

Let's pray. God empower us to wrap our heads around this. When others say we're losing in life, let them stand corrected. Any heart and mind who has their focus on Jesus is a winner. And when we make a mistake. Get back up again. What matters is the present. What matters is now. Amen.