

**Grove Presbyterian Church**  
**5 September, 2010**

**Ecclesiastes 7: 1-11**  
**Mark 8: 27-38**

Peter's expectations versus Jesus' reality. A tad different in their understanding of the measure of success.

For Simon Peter, it is fame, power, authority, winning, the community approving you. For Simon Peter is it being in charge of other people, for their sakes.

You want to be on God's side? Terrific. Unfortunately, you need to follow Jesus' metrics.

Peter's expectations or Jesus' realities?

To be true is more important than to win. To do what is right rather than push your rights.

Which explains why Peter rebukes Jesus. Peter knows better than Jesus. "Stop that nonsense. You'll upset the people. The Messiah means power. The people are counting on you being powerful and popular."

*"Lord, I want to be a Christian inna' my heart, inna' my heart"*

No, I really don't. No, thank you. Why would I want to be a Christian given what you expect? I'll take what Peter wants.

For being a Christian means you see others as Jesus sees them. That if I'm Sarah Palin, I must be ready to pray for, to love, to respect, to die for Al Sharpton as a child of God. And if I Al Sharpton, I must be ready to pray for, to love, to respect, to die for Sarah Palin as a child of God.

Are you willing to be damned that others, even those you ridicule, may be saved?

Please remember the Law of Point of View: your point of view says more about you than about the other person. What you say about others – from Presidents to physicians, from those needing the Good Samaritan Center to the residents at the Gate House, from fans from Southern to your daughter's coach -- reveals everything about you.

My mantra: if you're being vilified in 30 Seconds in the Press Enterprise, you're doing something right.

Success?

See the success of Janusz Korczak, refusing to save himself and instead accompanying his Jewish children as they are packed aboard cattle cars bound for Nazi concentration camp.

See the success of Dietrich Bonhoeffer going to the gallows for his bold, loving opposition to Hitler, proving power in weakness.

See the success of Eric Liddell, popular for winning Olympic gold medals as portrayed in the movie Chariots of Fire, but truly successful as a Presbyterian Missionary to China, rounded up and forced into Japanese Internment Camp serving the needs of others until he died there. He had been given by the Japanese the chance to leave camp but gave his place to a pregnant woman.

See the success of the medical missionaries whose memory will last far longer than the brutality and hate of their Taliban murderers.

These examples of Christian success I've cited are Oak Tree Moments. They come as Acorn Moments too. Acorns drop and take root daily:

At the nursing home, cutting toenails...

Neighbors needing a meal...

Packing up, ready to plant trees in Nicaragua...

Going up to hospital to wash a young woman's grimy hair...

Acorn Moments and Oak Tree moments of Christianity. Your point of view says more about you than about the other person

These three things.

See thee more clearly

Love thee more dearly

Follow thee more nearly

These three things:

...deny ourselves

How? By having such a strong sense of self, such a strong sense that our identify, our being, our nature is so fully wrapped up in God, that we can be trusting enough, loving enough to set aside our expectations, our demands, our desires to control for the sake of the gospel.

...take up their cross

How? When we are called upon to do what is Godly, what is right by God, we will shoulder it, regardless the price, regardless the public opinion, regardless the suffering or mockery.

...follow Jesus

How? The question is greater than choosing between good and evil, it is choosing between true and false. Since we are far from the good, it remains impossible for us to do good. What we can do is, by the Spirit of God, be true to Jesus.

Great. Just great.

But it is great. It is the only greatness.