

**Sunday, February 25, 2024 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**  
**Bible Study**  
**Second Sunday in Lent**  
**“For the Sake of the Gospel”**  
**Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants share about a time they misunderstood a situation and said the wrong thing. (Example: I once greeted a friend I had not seen in quite a while and mentioned how happy I was about her pregnancy. She replied that the baby had been born 3 months earlier.)

**Mark 8:31-38 Context.** In this week’s reading Jesus tells his disciples for the first time that he would suffer at the hands of the religious leaders of his day and be rejected by them; that he would be killed, and that he would rise again from the dead. Peter didn’t want to hear what Jesus was saying: he had just hailed Jesus as “the Messiah,” the king who would throw off the Roman oppressor’s yoke and usher in an age of liberty and freedom for God’s people. Jesus calls Peter “Satan” which means tempter (it doesn’t mean that Jesus thought that Peter was the Devil): it must have been tempting for Jesus to become the kind of Messiah the people expected. But then Jesus turned to the crowds and taught them that if they wanted to follow him, they needed to be prepared to give up many things, even their lives; but in giving up self-centeredness, they would find new lives filled with joy.

**Mark 9:2-9 Context.** This week’s reading reports the episode of the transfiguration of Jesus. It occurs at the mid-point of the gospel account, and is the starting point of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, from which there will be no turning back. The transfiguration is a classic theophany, i.e., revelation of God: Jesus’ appearance “changes” and his clothes appear dazzling. The scene takes place on “the mountain,” and is surrounded by the glory of Moses and Elijah, the greatest religious leaders of Israel who were thought to be still alive in God’s presence. Their mighty works were echoed in the deeds of Jesus: commanding the sea, reviving the dead, feeding the multitude, healing the sick, etc. Not only was Jesus worthy of their company, but as the voice from the cloud proclaims, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” But the disciples still didn’t understand – not even Peter, who six days before had confessed Jesus as the Messiah.

**Read Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

## **Read Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9 again -**

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- In Mark 8:31, Jesus is trying to tell his disciples that he will face great suffering, rejection, and death. But Peter, who had just identified Jesus as the Messiah in Mark 8:27-29, can't handle it. This is not what he expected, so he "rebukes" Jesus. Mark doesn't tell us exactly what Peter says to Jesus. Why do you think Peter responds this way? What do you imagine Peter says to Jesus?
- In Mark 8:33, Jesus tells Peter, "...you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." What helps you focus more on "divine things" and less on "human things"?
- In Mark 8:34, Jesus says his followers need to be prepared to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him. Fortunately, most of us don't have people literally nailed to crosses in our communities today, so what might it mean for us to "take up our cross" to follow Jesus? Are there people in your community who are persecuted for who they are, what they believe, the color of their skin, how they express themselves, or where they come from? How might you and your church share the love of God with these community members?
- For private reflection and prayer: What might you need to leave behind to follow Jesus more faithfully?

## **Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

O God of great compassion, thank you for your presence with us, especially during seasons of suffering. Forgive us for the times we have turned aside from those who suffer. May we be conduits of your love and mercy to those in physical, emotional, or spiritual pain. Help us discern what we need to put aside so that we can be more faithful followers of Jesus. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.