A LEADER WHO MUST SUFFER MAKES NO SENSE

Feb. 25, 2018 Mark 8:27-38

 The Apostle Peter and all the other Apostles would agree with the title of today’s message-----a leader who must suffer makes no sense. Isn’t this why Peter rebuked Jesus, corrected Him, if you will, after Jesus told the disciples that He must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes and be killed and three days later to rise again?

 Who did Peter think he was, to talk the way he did to the Son of God? Peter was just a man and they all knew Jesus was more than a man because He had done many miracles in their presence. Mere men do not, cannot do the things they had seen Jesus do.

 Now Peter is telling God that He must not do what He, God, had just declared that He was going to permit. He was going to suffer and die.

 Wasn’t Peter listening to Jesus? Yes, but with human-oriented understanding and thought. As were the other apostles. Their idea of a leader was that he have a huge following, overcome the enemies, leading the people to victory and be the head over a great nation.

 This is called the Theology of Glory. Jesus will lead us to victory over our enemies and we will all be happy and content. He can’t do this if he is dead.

 Jesus, on the other hand, knows that His path must take Him to the cross thru suffering and self-denial so that He can do the will of His Father, liberating mankind from the domination of the evil three, sin, death and the devil. So turning to Peter Jesus says: “Get thee behind Me, Satan!”

 This is the Theology of the Cross. We can see this God-directed thinking in the Old Testament. After the fall into sin by Adam and Eve, God confronts the devil who is in the snake, telling him that the One God will send to do battle with the devil will Himself be wounded.

 The clearest example of cross theology is Isaiah 53, the Suffering Servant Chapter. “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed.”

 Does this all make sense? Only if we see Jesus as our God-given substitute who took our sins upon Himself and suffered God’s wrath against sin by suffering and dying on the cross, paying the price of sin, which is death.

 The writer to the Hebrews, in chapter 9, verse 22: “Without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness.” So you see, Jesus was more than a good teacher. He was God’s appointed sacrificial Lamb to save humanity from their sins.

 The Old Testament Sacrificial system followed by Israel demanded that an animal die for the sins of the people. All these sacrifices over the years pointed to the one perfect sacrifice that would one day come, namely, the Messiah who would come to give His blood for the sins of all.

 This is the Good News of the Gospel. Our sins are forgiven by the shed blood of the Son of God. This is an accomplished fact---Jesus said so from the cross----“It is finished!”

 Do we still sin? Definitely. In thought, word, and deed. We are, as Luther put it, simil Eustis et pecatur---saint and sinner at the same time. We are weak, giving in to temptations of various kinds. Not because we want to but because we just cannot help it.

 James says in his first chapter, verse 14: “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” Eve ate the forbidden fruit because she was enticed by satan and desired it, ignoring God’s clear warning not to eat from that particular tree.

 We too, get in trouble when we ignore God’s word on how we are to live. A couple will choose to kill the unborn child in the womb because of a selfish reason, ignoring God’s clear word that says, ‘thou shalt not kill.’

 A child disobeys or gets angry with the parent, choosing to ignore the fourth commandment, ‘honor your father and your mother.

 If we look for it, sin is everywhere, at all levels of society, committed by all no matter their status or power.

 This is why God has given us a Savior who has done it all. By His wounds, we are healed. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life.

 We just hate that we sin, but we do not loose heart as we kneel at the foot of the cross of Christ, looking to Him for forgiveness and eternal life, promised to all who do believe.