

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Mark 8:27–38 • Who is Jesus?

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Mark 8:27–38 Who do you say I am?

Psalm 19 The glory of God

Overview

Today's Bible story gives us an opportunity early in the church year to talk to the children about who Jesus Christ is. There are many opinions out there in the world about this. The children will eventually have to make up their own minds—and their views may change as they go through different experiences in life. Our goal is to provide them a foundation for a belief in Jesus Christ as the human presence of God.

Key Points

- Jesus Christ is God in human form.
- Our beliefs about Jesus determine whether or not we are Christian.
- People of other religions can be saved by living according to their particular faith in God; Christians must believe in and follow Jesus Christ.

Example for Teaching Children

In our Bible story today, Jesus asks one of the most important questions there is—a question each one of us must eventually answer for ourselves. When Jesus asks it, he is away from the crowds, with his disciples (his closest followers) around him. First, he asks them, “Who do the crowds of people say I am?”

That's a good question! People have all different views of who Jesus was. (*In older classes ask:*) What are some of the things people may believe about Jesus? Some people don't believe in God, and think Jesus was a person like any other person. Others believe in God, but they're not Christian; they may see Jesus as a great prophet. Others are Christian, and see Jesus as the Son of God, or as God himself.

When Jesus asks his disciples who the crowds of people think he is, their answers show that the people think he is a great prophet. They had seen him do miracles, and had heard his powerful preaching using all those great stories to teach them. But they hadn't been as close to him as the disciples were.

Next, Jesus asks them a much more important question: “What about you? Who do *you* say I am?”

This is the same question the Lord asks each one of us. For us, what matters most is not what everyone *else* believes, but what *we* believe. Why? Because

whatever we believe, that's how we'll live our lives. Our beliefs will decide what kind of person we'll be.

(*For older classes:*) What difference does it make whether we believe Jesus was an ordinary person, a prophet, or God? How would we act differently depending on which we believed? (*Discuss*)

If we think Jesus was just an ordinary person, we might just ignore what he says. But if we believe he is the Lord God, then it becomes very important for us to listen to him, and live by what he teaches! His teachings are God's truth given especially for us.

In our church, we believe Jesus was God himself. God came to us as Jesus for many reasons. For now, it is most important to know that he did this so that he could teach us how to live in a good and loving way, and also be with us as our Savior and our Friend.

Basic Correspondences

John the Baptist = The Bible's literal meaning

Elijah = The prophecy in the Bible

Christ = The Lord as divine truth

Thoughts from Swedenborg

When it says “the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ” (Revelation 11:15), “Lord” means the same thing as “Jehovah” in the Old Testament and “Father” in the New: the Lord as the Divine itself and as divine good. “Christ” means the same thing as “God” in the Old Testament and “Son of God” in the New: the Lord as the divine humanity and as divine truth. “Christ” means the same thing as “Anointed,” “Messiah,” and “King”—which refer to the Lord as divine truth, and as the divine humanity when he was in the world. The Lord in his human side was divine truth.

Apocalypse Explained #684.2

There is one God, who is the creator and keeper of the universe. So he is the God of both heaven and earth. Two things make our life heaven: good actions done out of love and true ideas that come from faith. We get this life from God; not a single bit of it comes from ourselves. So the most important thing in religion is to accept God, believe in God, and love him. If we are Christian, we should accept the Lord—both his divinity and his humanity—and believe in him and love him, since all spiritual well-being comes from the Lord.

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