One Question For All Eternity

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. The privilege of gathering here every single Lord's Day to sing and to worship and to celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ is risen.

And once a year, we focus uniquely on that truth, though it is something that should impact us every single day of our lives.
And I pray that that is true for you as well. You know, for our congregation, we gather here every Sunday, week after week, and often on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights as well.
And it is the greatest joy and the greatest privilege to do so. There is nothing better than gathering on the first day of the week with the body of Christ to be reminded of what matters most.
We live in a world that has lots of struggle, lots of pain. You know that. You experience that. You see that. And yet every Sunday when we gather here, it reminds us of what we believe and of who we belong to and the hope that we have because of the truth that our God is so kind and gracious and compassionate.
[1:25] If you've got your Bible, open with me to Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 8 often on Easter Sunday, depending on what book of the Bible we're walking through, we step outside of that study to deal with the resurrection.

But as you'll see, the verses where we've come to in our study through this gospel, we don't need to step outside of where we've been because it is exactly the message for this resurrection Sunday.
So we'll be looking in verses 27 through verse 31. There are a few questions that you may be asked that can change your life.
If not change your life, at least impact your life. I don't know what kids in elementary school or middle school do today or how they would phrase it. But when I was a kid, one of the questions that could change your life, at least for that moment, depending on the answer, was this one.
Will you go with me? Any guys here remember getting the nerve to ask that question? And depending on that response, had a lot to say about how your day went.
[2:37] As you get a little bit older, it goes from will you go with me to a bigger question that really impacts your life. Will you marry me? And if she says no, then you say, well, I don't want to marry you now anymore.

If she says yes, then there you go. Other questions that you may be asked that can be life-changing. Do you want this job? Do you want to buy this house?
Did you forget our anniversary? All kinds of questions that may impact how your life goes. But there is one question.
One question over and above all other questions that truly is the single most important question you could ever be asked.
And one question above all other questions that your answer to it determines everything about you.
[3:46] Determines everything about your life today. And it's no stretch to say it's one question for all eternity's sake as well. If you're new to our church, we are walking just verse by verse through the gospel of Mark.

And last Sunday, we left off in chapter 8, verse 21. Friday, our Good Friday service, we cover 22 to 26. And that brings us this morning to verse 27.
In verses 27 to 31, what I want to do is just walk you through this brief text. And we'll do it by asking and considering three questions together.
One of which is the single most important question for you to consider today. The first question that comes from this text is, What will people do with Jesus?

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What will people do with Jesus? Verse 27, And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.
[4:53] And on the way, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am? Which gives us this first question, what will people do with Jesus?

Jesus said it this way, Who do people say that I am? So Jesus just contextually is leaving the area of Bethsaida, And he's going to go straight north to this area known as Caesarea Philippi.
It's about a 25-mile journey. In the first century, it would have been a full day's journey. It's right there at the foot of Mount Hermon. Caesarea Philippi is just about as north as you can go in the area.
Herod the Great had ruled over that area. After Herod the Great dies, his area of rule is then spread amongst his children.
Philip, known as Philip the Tetrarch, is now over this area. Philip enlarges the city, and he renames it Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus.
[5:58] Now there is already an area known as Caesarea Maritima. So to distinguish this area from that area, it became known as Caesarea Panius, or Caesarea Pan, in honor of the Greek god Pan.

It also in time became known as Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea from Caesar Augustus, Philippi from Philip the Tetrarch.
It's an area known for its idols, known for its pagan worship, known for the place of the worship of Pan, the Greek god of nature.
It's actually a pretty chilling place to be. We were just there a month ago with our group from our church that went to the Holy Land. We went right here to this exact area.
And you can see to this day, you can see the places where goats would be sacrificed, and places where there's this opening. You've got this huge rock, hill, stone complex.
[7:05] And inside of that, you see this opening that some refer to as the mouth of Hades, believed that it was the opening into the underworld. It's really quite a chilling place to visit if you know all the history and detail behind that location.

And I find it quite interesting that this is the place where Jesus would have this conversation. As they're walking the villages here of Caesarea Philippi, right in the midst of this place of idolatry and pagan worship and wickedness.
Jesus asked his disciples, who do people say I am? Who do the people say that I am? Now, the term for people here in the original text, it doesn't mean so much a group of individuals as much as it's a language that refers to a collective mass.
So, what Jesus is really asking here is, what's the consensus about me? Now, it's not that Jesus doesn't know, but he wants to engage his apostles for them to consider this question.
What's the consensus? Who do the people say that I am? As people have heard my preaching, they've seen my miracles, they've heard what I say, they've seen the opposition and rejection of the religious leaders against me, they've even seen his own hometown of Nazareth who has rejected him.
[8:41] All of these different things are going on, and the question is asked, what is the consensus about me? What's the word on the street, we might ask it. What's everybody out there saying?

What do you think people are doing with me? When they hear my name, what do the crowds say? Verse 28, they told him, John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others, one of the prophets.
Matthew, by the way, clarifies and adds to it that the prophet, that most of them, if they thought he was just an Old Testament prophet, and somehow, some sense, back to life, they thought it was Jeremiah.
So, some say, Jesus, they think you're John the Baptist. Now, just remember, in your New Testament history, John the Baptist has been beheaded. He was arrested, he was held in prison, and he was beheaded by Herod.
Well, why in the world would somebody think that Jesus was John the Baptist, if John the Baptist had already been beheaded?
[9:54] Well, in Mark 6, verse 14, it says, King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. And some said, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.

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But others said he is Elijah. Others said he is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old. And so, what you see is for a number of months, there are some different opinions forming about who people think Jesus really is.
Herod, who had had John the Baptist beheaded, is afraid that Jesus somehow has come back to life, that it's John the Baptist back to life as Jesus.
He doesn't know what to do with him. Others say that Jesus is Elijah. That comes from a misunderstanding of the Old Testament prophet Malachi.
Our last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, the last prophetic word God gave to his people before John the Baptist came to point the way to Jesus was a prophet named Malachi, who spoke how the Messiah would come, and there would be a forerunner, and it spoke of the power and the spirit of Elijah.
[11:17] Now, it's interesting, because if you know anything about John the Baptist, and anything about Elijah, they were known for their spirited, fiery preaching.

And I think it's telling that many of the people thought that Jesus was Elijah. Jesus was kind and tender and compassionate, to be sure, but if your idea of Jesus is that he was weak, or timid, or afraid, this should destroy that misconception.
No one is going to mistake a weak, timid preacher for Elijah, or for John the Baptist.
Others thought it was Jeremiah. Why would they think Jeremiah? Well, Jeremiah in the Old Testament was known as the weeping prophet. He grieved over the sinful condition of rebellious people.
And we know that Jesus himself grieved over the sinful, hardened hearts of his people. So there are different answers that are given to this question of, what will people do with Jesus?
[12:32] Who do you think that I am? What do the crowds think? What's the word in the street? What's the consensus of, what are people going to do with me?

And some say, well, you're, are you John the Baptist? Have you come back to life as John the Baptist? Are you Elijah? Are you some Old Testament prophet that somehow come back?
There's a consensus among the people that, that Jesus is unique. There's a consensus among the people that Jesus is somehow special, but most are mistaken because of hardened hearts.
The first question is, what will people do with Jesus? But this just gives way to a second question, which is the single most important question that could ever be asked.
There's no exaggeration. There's no stretch to say this question right here that was asked of the apostles that I ask you today is truly the single most significant question that anyone could ever ask you.
[13:39] And we find it as Jesus continues the conversation in verse 29. And he asked them, but who do you say that I am?

He starts with, what do the people think? What do the crowds think? What's the collective opinion of me? But then he says, who do you say that I am?
It's doubly emphatic in the original text. Who do you say that I am? And the emphasis is on not just what the crowds think, but who do you say that I am?
It's speaking to the group of the apostles now. It's the most important question that could be asked. Who do you say that Jesus is?
What do you believe about Jesus? What do you believe about his claim to be sent from the Father to be our Savior and Redeemer?
[14:45] What do you believe about his sinless life? What do you believe about the historical fact that he was crucified, laid in the borrowed tomb, and on the third day raised back to life?

He goes from asking, what do the people say? He turns it now to the apostles as a group. Who do you say that I am? And Peter, as he often does, jumps in there, and Peter answers for the group, and he says, you are the Christ.
You are the Christ. Now, it may be for you this morning, the Bible may be something you're not all that familiar with, or maybe some of the teaching of the New Testament is something that is a bit hard for you to fully understand at this point in your life, which is great.
We're glad you're here. I hope that today helps. Let me help you just a little bit with his name. When Peter says, you are the Christ, understand, it's not that Jesus is his first name, and Christ is his last name.

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It's not Jesus Christ, as my name is Michael Staten. That's not what it's about. Jesus is his name. Christ is his title.
[16:06] So, Christ comes from the Greek word Christos, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Mashiach, which means Messiah. Messiah.

All of it means the anointed one. To say you are the Christ is to ascribe to Jesus the title that you are the Messiah. You are the anointed one.
You are the one promised in the Old Testament. You are the one that God has sent to be our redeemer. In Hebrew, they would say Yeshua Hamashiach.
It's Yeshua, Jesus, Hamashiach, the anointed. Jesus, the anointed. And the reason why we are given the Bible is so you will be able to answer that question.
So, when the question is asked to you, who do you say that Jesus is? You'll know the right answer.
In fact, John 20, verse 31, says, these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.
[17:24] Why do you have the New Testament? It tells you. So that you will know that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one.

Yeshua Hamashiach, Jesus, the anointed. And that by believing, you will have life.
Matthew, in his gospel, chapter 16, verse 16, records this same conversation, and he actually gives us a little bit of a more complete, more full answer that Peter gave, that when Jesus said, who do you say that I am?
Peter said, you are the Christ, and he adds, the Son of the living God. Who do the crowd say that I am?
Some say John the Baptist. Some say Elijah. Some think you're an Old Testament prophet. Some think you're Jeremiah. And Jesus turns, and he says, it's not just what will people do with me, but what will you do with me?
[18:33] Who do you say that I am? And Peter says it right. You are the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one.

You are the Savior. Savior. And then verse 30, if you're new to our church, or perhaps new to Bible, so this may sound like a strange statement.
We've been covering this for a while now, because this keeps coming up in the gospels. Verse 30 says, he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. The phrasing here, he strictly charged, it's a strong word.
It's the exact same language used when it says in chapter one that Jesus rebuked the demon. It's the same word used in chapter four when it says Jesus rebuked the storm.
Same word. He strictly charged them. Now, why does Jesus say this? I think there's a couple of reasons.
[19:37] One is, Peter is absolutely right. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He's exactly right.

But two things. One, the message of the gospel is not yet complete. It's true, Jesus is the Messiah, but the Messiah was not only going to be born and live.
The Messiah was going to suffer and die and be raised back to life. The gospel message is not yet complete. Jesus must die as a payment for our sin.
And secondly, what people missed entirely is the Old Testament teaching that the Messiah, the one sent from God to pay for our sin, was going to be a suffering servant.
People's mindset in the first century in Jesus' day was that Messiah was going to come and he was going to be this conquering king, this powerful, victorious warrior that when Messiah arrived, it was going to usher in this golden age.
[20:48] When Messiah came, he was going to throw off all of the oppression that the nation had. He was going to lead them to military strength, lead them to economic freedom, lead them to have everything they had ever hoped and dreamed and anticipated to have.

And the thought in that day was that when Messiah arrived, that was when people in the land, in the covenant, in the nation, they were going to receive every one of their hopes and dreams.
That was their thought in that day. What they missed entirely, what the teachers and rabbis in that day missed entirely, is that when Messiah would come, he would first lay down his life as a payment for our sin.

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Now, it was all over the Old Testament, but they missed it. And so, when Jesus says, don't tell anyone yet about this, the idea is, if you go around calling me the Messiah, then what the crowds are going to do, they're going to think that I'm going to go into this kingdom that they want rather than the kingdom that I've come to do, namely, to lay down my life, to pay for sin, and bring you into a spiritual family of God.
So, Jesus is not going to be deterred. Remember, at this point in time, chronologically, we're now six, seven months, eight months away from the cross.
[22:40] His eyes are set toward the cross at this point. He knows what's coming. And he, remember when Jesus fed the 5,000 men plus the women and children, at the end of that amazing miracle, he feeds 20, 25,000 people in all.

What do the crowds try to do? The gospel tells us they try to take him by force and make him their king. Why? Because they wanted Jesus to do what they wanted done.
They thought, with this man who can feed thousands of people from one boy's lunch, if we could tap into that power, their thought is, we'll have all the food we want, we'll have all the money we want, we'll have all the victory we want.
And Jesus slips away from them because he didn't come to be that kind of a king. He didn't come to fulfill man's agenda. He came to lay down his life as a ransom for those who would believe.
So what will people do with Jesus? Some said he was Elijah. Some said John the Baptist. Some said a prophet. Some said Jeremiah. Second question, what will you do with Jesus?
[23:54] And Peter rightly says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And that leads us this morning to a third question that we find in verse 31.

What will Jesus do for you? What will Jesus do for you? Verse 31. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.
In God's providence, the very passage we've come to on this resurrection Sunday is a passage where Jesus says, I must rise again. What will Jesus do for you?
Well, specifically, there are four things that the verse tells us Jesus will do for us. Number one, Christ will suffer. He began to teach that the Son of Man, that was his favorite designation for himself.
It's used over 80 times in the New Testament. Comes from the Old Testament, Daniel chapter 7. John, speaking of himself, I must suffer many things.
[25:13] Yes, it's true. Christ is the King of kings and Christ is Lord of lords, but first he will suffer. He came first to be served.

He's going to serve others. He came first to serve, to lay down his life. He came first to pour out his life for us. He came first to be a ransom. He came first to be a sacrifice. He came first to be a servant, which is what the Old Testament taught.
But the people missed entirely. They had no concept of a Messiah who came first to serve. They didn't have in their mind this category for the Redeemer who would come first to suffer.
But Jesus says, and he clarifies, I must suffer. As has been well documented before there's a crown, there must be a cross.
Not only will Christ suffer for you, second, Christ will be rejected. The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes.
[26:35] The term for rejected here is a technical term. It refers to having considerable scrutiny, a legal scrutiny, and then rejecting the argument.

The idea here is that Christ is going to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, speaking of those who make up the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court in that day.
And so Christ says, I'm going to come and I'm going to be suffering many things and I'm going to be considered and rejected. You remember that Jesus, when he performs miracles, the religious leaders of the day who want nothing to do with Jesus because he talked about sin, they wanted to talk about freedom and power and wealth and prominence.
Jesus came and talked about sin and repentance and salvation. And so the religious leaders wanted nothing to do with him. They heard him and they watched his miracles and when they saw his miracles, they could not deny them because they saw it for themselves.
Why won't they worship him? Well, what they said is we know that you are doing supernatural work. We cannot deny that. We refuse to confess that you are God.

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[28:04] So our only alternative is to declare that you are of the devil, which is what the religious leader said, that he does his miracles by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of the demons.

He's going to be rejected by the leaders of the day. Let me just pause here and make sure you're clear on this.
That rejection from the world does not kill the mission. You need to understand that.
That was true in Jesus' day, that's true in your day. Rejection of the world of Christianity, rejection of the world of the truth of the gospel does not kill the mission.
It seems so counterintuitive. It seems like for a religion, for a movement, for a belief to survive, you've got to have the world embrace it or else it would die.
[29:15] But it's not the way it works with Christianity. You don't need the acceptance of the world, which also tells us that rejection by the world is not the worst thing that can happen to you.

It's been a number of years ago now, but I was in a meeting with a group of pastors, pastors, and we were talking about trying to design like a gospel track that could be used in our state.
And we were talking about how to, how you could share the gospel, how could you put the gospel in just a few words on a piece of paper that people in churches could take and give to friends and hand out and those kind of things.
And somebody said, you know what we really need is we need somebody really famous to be on the back of this track and endorse what we're saying.
And I just kind of started shivering. And I said in this meeting, so Jesus isn't enough?
[30:26] And they said, well, we just, we just need someone famous, someone that would let the world know around us that somebody famous agrees with us.

And they did that. I wasn't a part of it at that time. And the person who they put on there ended up making a wreck of his life.
Friends, you don't need the approval of the world when you have the gospel of Jesus Christ. God is not in heaven walking the halls thinking, is there just some celebrity who would make me look good?
Acceptance of the world is not necessary for the mission. And rejection of the world does not stop the mission. Which means, if you're a believer, you need to understand this clearly, that rejection of the world is not the worst thing that can happen to you.
Now, I was in middle school too, long time ago, but I remember it. And I wanted to be in, not out.
[31:54] I wanted to fit in with the crowd. I didn't want to be the weird guy. I remember being in high school a long time ago, but I remember it.

I wanted to be a part of the in-group. I remember having part-time jobs. I didn't want to be the one that was left out.
but I found out really early on in life that rejection from people is not the worst thing that can happen to you.
I would far rather strive to be pleasing and acceptable to God and rejected from the world than live my life trying to please the world, those of which, when they stand before the Lord, will be punished and judged.
why would I want to be with them? When Jesus tells his followers, I'm going to be rejected, that this doesn't just mean a few people aren't going to like me.
[33:01] The language he uses is, I'm going to be looked at, I'm going to be investigated, and the leaders and the powerful people today are going to turn their back on me. Now, if you're an apostle of Jesus and he tells you, I'm going to suffer and I'm going to be rejected, you know what they're thinking.

They're thinking, if that's true for you, that's likely going to be true for us. And if it was true for them, it's likely going to be true for you.
What I want you to understand is that rejection from the world is not the worst thing that can happen to you. He's going to suffer, he's going to be rejected, and then it says, and be killed.
He will be killed. He'll go to the cross on Friday at 9 a.m. From 9 a.m. to noon, he will suffer at the hands of men. At noon, the earth goes dark.
He will suffer. He will be punished. He will take on the price of God's wrath, poured out on our sin from noon to three, and then he will take his final breath on the cross.
[34:37] He will be put to death. Professional executioners will give their word that he was really dead, and he will be laid into a tomb.

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And if you're Peter, you've just made this bold declaration, you are the Christ, Christ, you are the Son of the living God.
Jesus says, that's true, but you need to know the whole story. I'm going to suffer.
I'm going to be rejected, and I'm going to be killed. God, but as you know, and why you've come this morning, there is a fourth thing Christ will do for you, and he says, and after three days rise again.
I'm going to suffer, I'm going to be rejected, I'm going to be killed, but don't worry about it, because I don't need the approval of the world to do what I've come to do. On the third day, I will rise again, and this becomes the single most important reality in all of human history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
[36:00] Now, for the disciples, for the religious leaders, they weren't thinking this way. Even though they knew the Old Testament, they weren't thinking this way.

Isaiah 42, Isaiah 49, Isaiah 50, Isaiah 52, Isaiah 53, all of it speaks of the suffering servant, but this is not what they had in mind, and Jesus tells them, here's what I'm going to do for you.
I'm going to suffer in your place. I'm going to be rejected. I'm going to take on your sin, and I'm going to be killed, but be of good courage, because on the third day, I will rise again.
Now, why is it that so many people wanted nothing to do with Jesus? I mean, this idea that, you know, Jesus was kind, and he was a teacher, and he was compassionate, he loved children, he healed people who were blind, he healed people who were deaf, he healed people who couldn't walk, even raised a few people back to life.
Why in the world would people reject such a person? Here's why. it was his message. That's why he was rejected, his message.
[37:25] The crowds loved it when he put his hands on their family members and healed their sickness. The crowds loved that. The crowds loved it when they were starving and had no money, and Jesus would just create food into existence and feed them.

The crowds loved that. But what they rejected was his message that you must repent.
You are a sinner in need of salvation. And even though Jesus was clear that he was going to pay the price for our salvation, even though he was clear he was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that said that the Redeemer would come and suffer in our place, the people in his day wanted nothing to do with suffering, nothing to do with rejection, and because of it they wanted nothing to do with him.
Make no mistake, Jesus is king of all kings, but it's in his suffering, his death, and his resurrection that he paid for your salvation.
So let's finish this morning with considering this question one more time. What will you do with Jesus?
[38:57] Jesus? Because in the end, when you stand before the Lord face to face, and make no mistake that you will, in that moment when you stand before the Lord Jesus, it will not in that moment be about what did people in the first century do with Jesus.

Jesus? When you stand before the Lord in that moment after your final breath, it will not be a question of what did the apostles do with Jesus.
And it won't even be about what did your parents do with Jesus, nor will it be about what did your children do with Jesus. In that moment, it will have everything for all eternity to do with this one question.
What did you do with Jesus? Jesus? What did you do? One single central question for all eternity, what did you do with Jesus?
And the good news is that this morning, on April the 9th, 2023, you have heard the truth of the gospel repeatedly.
[40:30] You've heard it sung. You've sung it yourself. You heard it by testimony in the baptistry. You've heard it read, and you've heard it explained.

Here's the good news. If today, if you would confess that you're a sinner, turn from your sin, and believe in the message of Jesus Christ, you this day will be saved.
God, not by your works, not by what the world says about you, not by your church attendance, not by your achievements, but by simply the grace of Jesus Christ, who suffered for you, was rejected for you, killed for you, and praise God, rose back to life for you.
And if this day you would call upon the name of the Lord, believing in who Jesus is, proven, vindicated, authenticated by the empty tomb, you this day will be saved.

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That's the good news. The bad news is to not answer the question is absolutely to get it wrong. [42:09] To say I don't want to answer the question is to get it wrong. To say I'll deal with it later is to get it wrong. To say I'll consider this when I'm older, I'll consider this when I, when my health is failing is to get it wrong.

This day, this day would you call upon the name of the Lord. And I'll tell you this friends, when you stand before the Lord, not one of you will be able to say I didn't know.
I never heard. It was never explained. Because this day, you have heard the answer to how you can have everlasting life.
And it's found in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the living God.
Lord, would you even this morning, cry out to the Lord in faith and ask Him to forgive you and to save you and to transform your life, not just for today, but truly, for all eternity.
[43:57] The empty grave proves He is the Christ and the Son of the living God.

Lord, we thank You today for Your Word. We thank You today for the songs we have sung that tell us of the Gospel.
We're thankful for the baptisms that have shown us a picture of the Gospel. We're thankful for the Word we have read and studied. And I pray that even this day, for any who do not know You, that they, on this very day, would walk from spiritual death into spiritual life by believing the truth that we serve a risen Savior.
In His name we pray. Amen. Amen.

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