

## Say No to Shame

**Mark 8:31-38**  
**March 23, 2025**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
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An American businessman was at the pier of a tiny, coastal village in Mexico when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the boat were several large yellow-fin tuna. The businessman complimented the quality of the fish and asked how long it took to catch them. The fisherman said it didn't take too long.

The businessman asked why he didn't stay out longer and catch more fish? "I have enough to take care of my family's needs for quite awhile now," said. "But what do you do," asked the businessman, "with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late; fish a little; play with my children; take siesta with my wife, Maria; stroll into the village every evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor."

The businessman scoffed. "I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing, and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat, and then several more, and then a whole fleet of fishing boats.

Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you would sell directly to the processor and eventually open your own cannery. You would control the product, the processing. and the distribution. You would need to leave this small fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise."

The fisherman asked, "But, señor, how long will this all take?" "Fifteen to 20 years," said the man. "But what then, señor?"

The businessman laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an IPO and sell stock to the public and become very rich; you would make millions."

"Millions, señor? Then what?"

"Then you would retire. Move to a small fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta, and play your guitar."

As you can imagine, the fisherman rejected the businessman and his crazy idea. There's no shame in being true to who you are. The shame comes from allowing outside influences to change who you are – deep down inside, change the person God made you to be, the calling God put in your heart.

Jesus knew who he was and what he was called to do here on earth, a calling that the world rejected as shameful. In today's New Testament lesson, we see Jesus and his disciples

grapple with the shame of going against popular thinking to follow the plan and purpose of God.

Jesus is telling his followers about what he was sent here to do, saying, "... The Son of Man must undergo great suffering; and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes; and be killed; and after three days rise again."

And Jesus said this right out in the open for all to hear. Peter, however, takes him aside and begins to rebuke him. Peter is ashamed of what Jesus has said, ashamed to be a follower of someone who would willingly undergo suffering, be rejected by society and the authorities, and give up his own life doing it.

Sometimes we have to suffer for what we truly believe, what we know in our heart-of-hearts is most important. And that's the hardest thing to do, since any such suffering we endure is by choice. We could instead pretend to go along with the crowd. We could keep quiet and not get involved. We could let others carry the banner when it comes to standing up for what's right. We could, and too often we do.

After Peter pulls Jesus aside to rebuke him, Mark tells us that Jesus makes a point of answering Peter in public view. "Turning and looking at his disciples, (Jesus) rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan!'" – get behind me tempter – "For you are setting your mind – not on divine things – but on human things."

It's easy to let shame get in between us and what God calls us to do, who God calls us to be. For instance, it takes something to gather up the kids and bring them to Sunday worship or Wednesday LOGOS – something not all families are willing to do.

It takes something to rally around a cause with total strangers rather than going along with everyone else, particularly when that "everyone else" is family and friends with different viewpoints on major issues.

It takes something to give of your time and money to help someone in need, and to do it consistently and graciously. It takes something to lead ministry programs here at church, and I know those in leadership sometimes wonder if it's all worth it.

It takes something, and in the end, it is worth it.

It's worth it because – if you're following your calling as a Christian – God will bless you and the world through your efforts. It's pretty simple, really. When we turn our backs on our Christian calling, we lose out. But when we devote time, effort and resources putting our faith into practice, there are blessings and rewards, even amid the sacrifice, the cost, and yes, the shame of doing things others avoid or neglect, divine things instead of human things, as Jesus calls it.

To emphasize this point, Jesus calls out to the crowd – calls out to us when we're sitting on the sidelines – and he says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ... For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?" – to get their life back after they've given up on God?

We have people in this world focused on gaining more power, more money, more status at the expense of turning their backs on the power, the truth and the life of Jesus Christ, the basic tenets of Christianity – love of God and neighbor, going the extra mile, turning the other cheek, doing it for the least of these.

By turning their backs on God just to gain more money, power and status, they have given up, says Jesus, given up on the true meaning of life, the purpose of humanity, the blessing of genuine brotherhood and sisterhood, arm-in-arm.

They have given up all of this. But those of us who say no to letting shame drive our choices and actions, we say yes to standing tall alongside one another, in doing the right thing, in denouncing all that opposes the Spirit of God, as revealed to us through the teachings of Jesus.

So, the next time you're tempted and shamed into going along with the crowd, know that by standing strong in the convictions of your faith you're not giving up anything important, anything that will last. And know that, in fact, you're gaining so much more, gaining the fellowship and strength of Christian brothers and sisters the world over, who are not ashamed to stand alongside you, and call you friend in the Spirit, and truth and blessing of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord, in this season of self-denial, our attention is often turned back to the very thing we have given up. We are acutely aware of our hungers and desires, and so we're acutely aware of our weaknesses, too.

Lord, cover us now with your grace.

In your word, you tell us that your ways are higher than our ways, and so we pray for you to cover us like a clear, nighttime sky, full of mystery and light.

Cover us with the knowledge that we do not know all, but that you do. Cover us with the knowledge that light shines, even if we can't always see it.

Cover us with the strength to wait through our temptations the way a watchman waits for morning. Cover us with the hope of your deliverance, which is as sure as the sunrise.

Lord, we pray for those who need a special measure of your hope, your healing, your comfort and care. We pray for all those in need of renewal and strength to meet their daily struggles. We pray this confident in your ability to renew and strengthen us, and to guide us, as you did in teaching us the Lord's Prayer, which we lift up to you now, saying:

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**