

**"Who do people say I am?"**

Isaiah 50:5-9a

Psalm 116

James 2:14-18

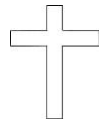
Mark 8:27-35

Isaiah did not rebel during the difficult times of being insulted and even beaten. The Lord God was his help and he was not disgraced. It is the Lord God who upholds him and he challenges those that dispute him because they cannot prove him wrong in any confrontation.

The psalmist notes that the Lord is gracious, just, and merciful and heard his pleas for help. He was in distress and sorrow, encompassed by death as he called out, "O Lord, save my life!" The psalmist was brought low but saved by the Lord who freed his soul from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from stumbling. He walks in the land of the living.

James emphasizes to the brothers and sisters in faith the weakness of words of consolation without good works. Mere words are not enough for persons suffering in their real needs of poverty and hunger. Faith, of itself, without works is dead, and James says he demonstrates his faith by his works.

Jesus asks his disciples who people say he is. The responses, they say, are numerous and include John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other great prophet. Peter responds that Jesus is the Christ. The Son of Man, says Jesus, must be rejected, suffer, and be killed but Peter, in turn, tries to placate Jesus about this and is rebuffed because Peter is not clearly seeing God's will. Jesus' message is, "come after me, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me."



**The Father is merciful, just, and gracious.  
The Son calls us to follow his path, while  
The Holy Spirit empowers us to do so.**

The readings indicate that God is near, hears our prayers, is our help, and we, in turn, must have our faith profess itself in concrete practices that reach out to the poor, the oppressed, the powerless, the marginalized. Plan on helping someone this coming week in a concrete way. The prayerful Christian is given the grace of needed self-denial and the power to take up the daily cross. Jesus calls us to stand on common ground with him, encouraging us to stand on our own two feet by recognizing that divine authority makes itself known through **common sense**.

**Common sense** is the ultimate authority. Deep down we all know this. If the teachings of ministers and theologians can't stand up to **common sense** they crumble. If the exhortations of preachers fall short of **common sense**, they fail. When a teacher awakens us to use **common sense** ourselves, we respond as Jesus' hearers did. "They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority." (Mark 1:22). Mark adds, "not like the scribes" - not like the authoritarians. This comparison contains a death sentence for Jesus. Nothing is more threatening to an authoritarian mind than an appeal to the authority of **common sense**. Religious and political authoritarians alike will not rest until anyone who mobilizes **common sense** among the people is wiped out. This is why Jesus had to die."

(Words of Common Sense for Mind, Body and Soul, Bro. David Steindl-Rast, p.37)

**Common sense** is a sharp, resonant realization of how things are in the present circumstance and across the globe.

(Thomas Moore)

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