Matthew 16: 13-23
Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi and he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"
They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
Then he strictly ordered his disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you."
He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."
Our Scripture Reflection

Peter was quick to respond, “You are the Christ.” But did he really understand the implications of what this meant? He had so much to learn:

1. That while Jesus was the victorious Messiah, His true victory would be seen on Calvary. Suffering, as much as Peter didn’t want to hear it, was essential to Jesus’ victory.
2. About forgiveness and the need for humility. Rocky would crumble badly as he denied His Lord three times.
3. That even though he would become the leader, he would need to learn how to wash feet. All of these things Peter would learn and live after the glorious resurrection, and we can learn them, too.

Food for your Journey

Even when we embarrass God the most, God responds only in love, assuring us that "I choose you."

Bob Olmstead of Reno, Nevada, tells of the experience of colleague Bill Welsh, a pastor in Desert Hot Springs, California. Members of Welsh’s congregation had a child who was subject to sudden seizures. These seizures were violent and painful, not only for the child but also for the parents and those who witnessed the child’s suffering.

"The father and child would come to church regularly and the father’s practice was to hold the child. One Sunday morning in the midst of worship, the child was seized [and] writhed painfully ... The father lifted him caringly, carried him ... to the back of the sanctuary, where he stood still rocking the child tenderly, speaking to him gently until finally the seizure relented ... There was no sign of embarrassment or frustration on the father’s face, only love for the hurting child. And then Welsh said, 'In that moment, while I was preaching, I was preached to. I heard God speak to my heart and say, 'That’s the way I love you through your imperfections. I’m not embarrassed to have people know that you are my child.'”"

- Bob Olmstead,
Olmstead, who ended his sermon with this illustration, only adds these words: "That is the Gospel. Amen."

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, Like Peter, I am weak and sinful. So often my ego gets in the way of my attempts to grow in holiness. Forgive me, Lord. Strengthen me with Your Grace so that I may get behind Your Son and walk faithfully in His footsteps. Amen.