

Introduction to Mark 8:31-38

Sunday, July 17, 2016
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Jesus' identity and mission sets the tone for the identity and mission of those who follow Him. If we think of Jesus primarily as a good teacher, then we may seek to learn all we can from Him, but that is as far as we will go with Him. If we think of Jesus as primarily a therapist who makes us feel positive, good things about ourselves, then we may spend time with Him, but only so long as it makes us feel good. Even if we think of Jesus primarily as Savior, we may go so far as to be grateful that we don't have to experience the penalty of Hell, but we could still try to live as comfortably as we can here and now.

Instead, Jesus calls His followers to identify with Him in every way. If He is the Son of Man and Son of God, we also must be adopted as children of God the Father and relate to Him as such. And if He is the suffering servant, who was rejected, died, and rose again, then we must embrace suffering, rejection, and death in this life, knowing that we will be raised again on the Last Day in the same way He was.

Context

In the previous section, Jesus asks His disciples who the crowds think He is and, more importantly, who they think He is. When Peter responds that Jesus is the Christ, He affirms the response, but strictly commands them not to spread the word. The reason was because Peter didn't understand what the word meant. In the same way Jesus would correct Peter's understanding of who He is, He will also correct their understanding of what it means to follow Him.

Structure

- I. Explanation of True Discipleship (34-38)

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Mark 8:31-38

“Two Crosses”

If you accept the first, you must embrace the second!

His Cross

- Prediction (v. 31)
- Confusion (v. 32)
- Correction (v. 33)

Our Cross

- Obligation (v. 34)
- Explanation (v. 34-35)
- Evaluation (v. 36)

Discuss

1. Pastor Don mentioned that one of our biggest problems is having a human worldview, rather than a biblical one. How is our thinking influenced by a human worldview? What are the things that we do, or people we interact with, that might give us an unbiblical worldview?
2. How might someone who has a secular, human worldview think about suffering and denying oneself? What underlies that belief? How does Peter's rebuke of Jesus reflect that thinking?
3. Read Colossians 3:1-17. How does that passage inform Jesus' teaching about dying to self? According to Paul, what should "dying to self" look like?
4. What practical disciplines have you established to die to self on a regular basis? If you haven't, why not? If you're struggling to adopt them, how can we as a group encourage you to persevere?
5. Telemachus the monk provides us with an excellent example of someone who died to self for the sake of the gospel when he sacrificed his physical body to stop the bloodshed of the gladiator games. Since you are likely not a monk or in a position to prevent gladiator games from taking place, what would it look like for you to die to self for the sake of someone else hearing the gospel, the good news about Jesus?

Go Deeper (*This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting*)

Gospel Connections: The gospel is really only good news to us if we respond appropriately. If we respond in unbelief, or casual “belief” that doesn’t manifest itself in our actions, then the gospel of Jesus’ resurrection, reign, and return is actually bad news. There is no such thing as a “casual follower” of Jesus. If we commit our lives to following Jesus, the result will be no different for us than it was for Him—suffering, rejection, death before resurrection and glory. The right response, then, is to embrace the suffering and rejection in this world for the sake of Christ, and in so doing, we will reap everlasting rewards.

Whole Bible Connections: Peter’s wrong thinking regarding the Messiah may actually have been rooted in Scripture, but if it was he only saw part of the story. In Daniel 7, the Son of Man is presented in glory with an eternal kingdom. That will certainly take place, but only after Jesus has performed His duties as the faithful Israel, the Suffering Servant of the LORD (Is. 52:13-53:12).

There is an interesting parallel between Mark 8:35-37 and Psalm 49:7-9. There the psalmist speaks of how incapable mankind is of paying the ransom for their own lives (souls). In the same way, Jesus makes the point that we cannot save ourselves through any kind of material gain or even the sacrifice of another sinner like us. We could only be ransomed through the blood of the perfect sacrifice, Jesus.

Theological Connections: Discipleship is rooted in our union with Christ. It is not so much that we *ought* to pattern our lives after Christ if we follow Him, but that our lives necessarily *will* follow the pattern of His because we have been united with Him (cf. Rom. 6). So Christ bore His cross for the salvation of the world, we do the same, not that our “crosses” can effectually atone for the sins of others, but our “crosses” are what make possible the spread of the gospel among all people.