

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 26 - Mark 8:34-9:1

In last week's passage we discovered the central claim of Christianity; that Jesus was the promised king, who came to suffer and die but then to be resurrected from the dead. This week's passage deals with the life Jesus calls his followers to live. We have to believe who he says he is and trust in his character in order to follow him in this way. Do you believe who he says he is?

1. Following Jesus Is Supposed To Be Costly

- Read Mark 8:34

Jesus told his disciples to deny themselves and to take up their cross *for the sake of the gospel*.

I. Denying self

The heart of Christ's call to follow him is a call to self-denial. A sign of the gospel taking hold of our hearts is that we will think less of ourselves and more of others.

II. Taking up our cross

The disciples would have understood that the cross represented death, humiliation, mockery and shame, guilt and weakness, and that in order to live for Jesus that they would probably face these sorts of struggles. As we follow Christ it should and will cost us.

- ❖ Q: Why is the cross a symbol of shame, mockery, humiliation, weakness and guilt?
- ❖ Q: What did Jesus mean when he said that in order to follow him we would need to take up our own cross?
- ❖ Q: What is the difference between taking up our cross for the gospel and suffering in general?
- ❖ Q: What does it mean to deny ourselves?
- ❖ Q: In which area of your life do you struggle the most to put others before you and why? (Do you see this as an opportunity to change and follow Christ more closely by putting others first?)

2. Following Jesus Looks Like Loss But It Is Great Gain

- Read Mark 8:35-37

Jesus tells us that we will never get the life we are after by seeking it from the world. Our sense of worth and identity is found only in him and yet our culture tells us that we can only have a sense of worth if we have money, prestige, power and attractiveness. But in being our creator, Jesus knows how we were designed and where we are able to find real life, real fulfilment and real joy. In being born again and viewing the world differently we find that our desires and goals change, and that our greatest fulfilment is in knowing Jesus more and more. The great irony is that many of us Christians are trying to hold on to how the world gains its sense of fulfilment and value and as a result we are losing the abundant life that Jesus died to give us (John 10:10). We hold onto the world in the way we use our time, talent, treasure and how we deal with temptation.

I. Time

We busy ourselves to the point that we are all exhausted, and we then have no time to serve the church, read the Bible or get involved in gospel community. The very things that give us life we have no time or energy for.

II. Talent

Our culture worships people with incredible talent and because we buy into that, many of us feel discontent with who we are and with what God has gifted us with. Our gifts and abilities are of great worth when they are put to use for the sake of the gospel and yet the great irony is that we so often don't want to use them for the church because it seems like just another place for us to feel mediocre in life. We lose out on the joy and blessing it gives to others when we don't use our gifts to build and strengthen the body of Christ.





THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

III. Treasure

God has given every one of us many things to steward well; finances, family and resources. He wants us to share, give to others and trust him with what he has given us. Our culture tells us to save, hoard, and spend only on ourselves. When we do this we are losing the life he died to give us. We can only enjoy what we are prepared to give away.

IV. Temptation

As those who follow Christ, we choose to walk away from the temptations that the world indulges in. One of the ways we suffer for the gospel is when we deny ourselves what everyone else is freely indulging in. Even though it doesn't feel like it in the moment, we often end up gaining in life rather than losing because the temptations tend to seduce us into situations that promise way more than they deliver.

- ❖ Q: What does Jesus mean when he says, "if we try save our life we will lose it"?
- ❖ Q: Would you consider yourself to be a really busy person? Do you consider that to be a good thing? If so, why? (e.g. do you feel it shows people a measure of your productivity or success?)
- ❖ Q: Do you ever feel guilty or resentful when the church suggests you get involved in community, give of your finances or serve on a team on a Sunday? What is the cause of these feelings and what needs to change?
- ❖ Q: Why do some of us struggle to let go of our finances as though they are our only means of provision (as though God is not the actual source of all our wealth)?
- ❖ Q: When last were you tempted to do something, but because of Christ you denied yourself the opportunity? What was the outcome? Do you feel like you gained life and joy from walking away?
- ❖ Q: What one thing do you feel God is asking you to change in order to follow him more closely (time, talent or treasure)?

3. Following Jesus In This Life Has Huge Implications In The Next

- Read Mark 8:38

Jesus had just told his disciples that he was going to be greatly shamed and then suffer and die. If they were to follow him, they would be associated with him in his shame. Knowing that, they had a choice to make, either they would follow him or they wouldn't. Either they would count the cost in this life, or they would count the cost in the next life. Jesus constantly told his followers to live with eternity in mind.

- ❖ Q: Do you consider the next life when you plan your finances?
- ❖ Q: If you were to live for eternity and not just for this life, how do you think it would impact how you live your life?
- ❖ Q: What costs to your life have you incurred in order to live for eternity? Do you still think those decisions are worth it?
- ❖ Q: How can we as a Gospel Community encourage one another to live for eternity and not just for today? How do you think that mindset would shape the way we approach our Gospel Community???

