



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #31

‘The Cost of Living in the Shadow of the Cross!’

Mark 8:34-38

Sunday, December 1st, 2024

Last week in ‘NOW’ sermon series:

- Last week in our study of Mark’s Gospel, we were able to get to the center of Mark’s Gospel with verse 29 ‘You are the Christ’.
 - Last Sunday I asked the most important question of all time that Jesus also asked His disciples in the text **‘Who do you say that I am?’**
- I asked the question: *How is the most important question of all time revealed in these verses where Peter and Jesus get into a heated discussion?*
 - **Truth #1: *The Request.* (v. 27)**
 - **Truth #2: *The Responses.* (vv. 28-30)**

- **Truth #3: *The Revelation.* (vv. 31-32a)**
- **Truth #4: *The Rebukes.* (vv. 32b-33)**
- Based on last Sunday’s message, how have you answered the two questions that I left you with last Sunday?
 - *Do you verbally confess that Jesus is?*
 - *Does your life depict that Jesus is Lord?*

‘The Cost of Living in the Shadow of the Cross!’

Mark 8:34-9:1

Sermon in a Sentence:

The Cost of Living your life in the Shadow of the Cross is that you will experience Self-Denial, Suffering, and Surrender to Jesus.

Intro:

- ***Living in the shadow of the Cross is no longer the spotlight of your own self saturated selfishness.***
 - This morning we come to a passage of scripture in our study of Mark that is really going to cause us to have to change somethings in our lives and how we view our relationship with Christ, if we are open to the speaking of the Holy Spirit.
- ***This morning we come to a text where Jesus talked to His disciples (and the crowd following Him), about the cost of following Him.***

- *Modern day Christians have completely lost the fact that our relationship with Christ will **COST** us something.*

- Too often we (me included) think of what Christ can do for us, instead of what we are to give up in following Him.
- *Scripturally, I believe that you can argue if your salvation does not cost you SOMETHING are you really following the Christ of the Bible?*

- *Church, we do not follow Jesus for what He can give us, but what we can give Him.*

- *In fact, in Mark's Gospel the idea of self-worthiness is not found in Mark's Gospel.*

- Mark does not pump up the ego of mankind, yet does the exact opposite.
- Scholar James Edwards said *'Following Christ in self-denial and even in suffering is a necessary means of salvation, not of being worthy or of becoming worthy by so doing. One cannot follow Jesus except 'on the way' of self-denial and the cross.'*

- *Even in our culture today we've lost the concept that the Cross **COST** Christ and that if we follow Christ, it will cost us.*

- The modern culture that we live in has made the symbol of the cross to be used in modern day

culture primarily as a figure of speech or as jewelry.

- *In the first century context that Jesus used the phrase, the symbol of the cross was an instrument by the Roman government of cruelty, pain, dehumanization, and complete shame.*

- One scholar stated *'The cross symbolized hated Roman oppression and was reserved for the lowest social classes.'*

- To people in the first century the cross was an outward expression of the capability of Rome to inflict terror and pain to people.

- To take up your cross, as we will see in our text this morning, is to deny yourself, go through suffering, and totally surrender to the Lord.

Read Mark 8:34-38

Question to Ask:

What does Jesus tell His disciples the cost will be for following Him?

Truth #1: Self-Denial. (v. 34)

- 'And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'
 - *This is certainly a command of Christ that many of us are not as comfortable with as we'd like to think.*

- The idea of putting ourselves down to raise someone else up (even Jesus), is very counter-cultural.
- ***What is so interesting with verse 34, is that Jesus calls two groups instead of the usual one (just disciples usually).***
 - He calls the crowd and the disciples.
 - ***This is significant to point out because it shows that this teaching is not just for the 12, but for anyone who would come after or follow Him.***
- Therefore, this same message applies to us, and anyone who comes and follows Christ Jesus as Lord.
 - Scholar James Brooks summarized the message of what Jesus said in verse 34 well, when he said ***'It is to renounce the self as the dominant element in life. It is to replace the self with God-in-Christ as the object of affections. It is to place the divine will before self-will.'***
- I believe Jesus gives three distinct ways in this passage of how we are to come after Him...
 - These are three things you must take into account if you are contemplating following Jesus today, or if you are saved, ***are these three things apparent and a part of your life?***
- ***Deny Yourself. (v. 34a)***

- 'let him deny himself'
- ****Word Study****
 - The word 'deny' in the english comes from a greek word ***'Aparneomai'*** ***ἀπαρνησάσθω*** which literally means ***to deny, disown, renounce and disregard.***
 - This is a very strong greek verb. It can also mean 'to have no association with' or 'to disown completely.'
 - This word occurs 11 times in the NT, and in Mark 14:30-31 and in Mark 14:72, this same word is used in context of Peter's denial of Jesus.
 - In Luke 12:9, this verb is used in the context of Christ's denial in Heaven of those who will deny Him before men.
- ***There's much debate on what Jesus meant when He said 'deny himself'...***
 - I believe that Jesus' point was that those who really want to follow Him must be willing to disown themselves and give everything to Him.
- ***This means that we must change our mindset of thinking about what Christ has done for us lately, or what we think He should do, and totally commit ourselves to giving our all to Him.***

- As Dr. Daniel Aiken phrased it ‘to give up the right to self-determination’.
 - ***Meaning you and I live as Christ directs us and leads us. Meaning we treasure Jesus more than ourselves, possessions, comforts, and our own aspirations.***
 - It really and truly means to lay it all on the line for Christ.
 - This is a level of walking with Christ that I feel and fear very few Christians in America reach.
 - ***The ones who do, have a completely different mindset. It’s all Christ, and never about us.***
 - The great English preacher Alexander McClaren said in his sermon this text ***‘To slay the life of self is always pain, and there is no discipleship without crucifying ‘the old man’.***
 - To the context Jesus was speaking to that day, the call to self-denial was to abandon their own self made apostate system that focused on works done by them, instead of the Work of Christ on the cross.
 - ***But by rejecting their own self-righteous and self-motivated efforts as worthless and then clinging to God’s gracious Gift***
- ***through faith, could they be saved.***
 - We too, need to stop thinking we are a gift to God, and realize He is the greatest gift to us we could ever receive.
 - ***Take up your Cross. (v. 34b)***
 - ‘take up his cross’
 - As I mentioned a moment ago, the Cross was not a sentimental or iconic symbol in the first century that it has become today.
 - ***To the first century audience that Jesus would have been speaking to, the Cross was understood as an instrument of execution.***
 - (Similar to what you and I would think of as the electric chair).
 - Crosses would prolong death and would involve great torture and shame.
 - ***Jesus is essentially saying, if you follow me, you’ve got to be willing to die for Me.***
 - Jesus called on His followers then, and calls on us now as His followers, to be willing to die for Jesus.
 - To love Jesus so much, that we can get to the place where we agree with the Apostle Paul, that to die is gain.
 - This causes me to ask the question, ***What are our modern day crosses?***

- Church family, they are not just simply trials or hardships. They are not the ppl who get on your nerves, rude boss, or the unfair teacher.
 - *This is often what we equate to being our 'cross', but this is a very worldly way of viewing it.*
- Neither is a physical illness or handicap a cross.
- *So, what is the cross that Christ tells us to bear?*
 - *To bear the Cross of Christ is to walk in the steps of Christ and to totally embrace His life.*
 - *To bear the Cross is to accept the disdain and disrespect that we will receive by choosing to follow Jesus.*
 - *To bear your Cross is to take the road less traveled and live out the footsteps of Jesus in our business practices, sexual ethics, and show Christ in the marketplace and in the world.*
 - *Church family it comes from embracing our own weaknesses instead of boasting power.*
- Your day to day difficulties are not the cross Christ is asking you to take up. Even non-believers have illnesses and physical mishaps!
 - *Difficulties for Christ's sake are an indication of Cross bearing.*
 - *Scholar Kent Hughes said 'We need to ask ourselves if we have any difficulties because we are following close after Christ.'*
- *Follow Jesus. (v. 34c)*
 - 'follow me'
 - The last of the three imperatives that Jesus gives the crowd (and His disciples), is possibly the simplest yet hardest. *Follow Jesus.*
 - *This verb in the greek literally means loyal and continual obedience to Christ.*
 - *It does not mean follow Christ when everyone is watching.*
 - It does not mean go down the aisle and say a prayer so everyone will think you're saved.
 - It does not mean only come to Church when things are going poorly.
 - It means to follow Jesus with real and genuine loyalty and allegiance to Him, no matter what.
 - *This same verb is found in John 10, where Jesus also used this same verb to say...*
 - 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.' John 10:27

- As followers of Christ, you and I are characterized by our loving obedience to Him and His Word.
- Our obedience to Christ is the fruit of our salvation...
 - **'So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples," John 8:31**
- So far, the cost for following Jesus is Self-Denial, but secondly Jesus tells us it is also suffering...

Truth #2: *Suffering.* (vv. 35-37)

- 'For whoever would save his life[d] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. **36** For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?'
 - To many, these are and can be confusing words. So what do they mean?
 - ***I feel that Jesus is saying here 'Losers are keepers.'***
 - To suffer in this life for Jesus is to be able to be secure in Heaven with Him.
 - ***The true meaning of these particular words of Jesus is that those who are unwilling to surrender their lives to Christ, that choose to cling to sin, selfish ways and be accepted by the***

world, will one day lose their soul in everlasting death.

- ***On the contrary, those who are willing to abandon everything by denying themselves, taking up their Cross, and following Jesus will receive eternal life.***
 - Verses 35-38 of our text this morning, are the basis of the challenge with the three imperatives that Jesus gave us in verse 34.
- I believe there are two important things to consider about the suffering that comes with living in the shadow of the Cross.
- ***You've got to prioritize eternity. (v. 35)***
 - 'For whoever would save his life[d] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.'
 - ***To prioritize eternity, and to live your life with eternity in mind is completely contrary to what our culture teaches.***
 - From a young age the culture seeks to condition us to look out for ourselves, live for yourself, pamper yourself, if it feels good do it, all these things promote self and the temporary living mindset.
 - But that's not what Jesus teaches us here...

- *He teaches that we must lose our life and all the earthly possessions and things that we care about on this earth.*
 - We must give up getting the last word in an argument, or having to have our ideas or personal stamps on the work projects, or always having to one up someone.
 - **The one who gives up His life for Jesus and the Gospel will save it!**
 - But, when we prioritize eternity and live in that way, here's what we risk...
 - Safety.
 - Security.
 - Satisfaction.
 - All in this world.
 - *But I can't help but think of what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:8**...*
 - 'Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ'
 - *When you prioritize eternity you suffer the enjoyment of sins on this earth.*
 - Church family let me remind you this morning that you cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in the Church. It's all for Jesus, or it's nothing.
- *You've got to **put down** the temporary. (vv. 36-37)*
 - 'For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 'For what can a man give in return for his soul?'
 - *What good is it for you to live 75 years, have a mansion of a home, have millions upon millions of dollars, all the cars and possessions money can buy, but lose your soul?*
 - Jesus asks two important questions here that must compel us today to put down the temporary things of this life that we often hold so tightly to.
 - *If you and I focus on bringing lost people to Heaven with us and building up treasures in Heaven that we might lay them down at the feet of Jesus, then we will be swimming against the stream of our culture.*
 - Trust me, it's worth it.
 - In many of the funerals I've conducted myself and even attended, I've often heard it said 'If that person could come back and tell you anything, it would be to focus on the eternal things and not the temporary.'
 - **Illustration**
 - There was a famous emperor in European nations in the 6th and 7th centuries, by the name of Charlemagne.

willing to go across the street and share the good news.

- ***Jesus calls the crowd that was gathered there a 'sinful and adulterous generation.'***
 - He repeats the language that many of the OT prophets used in Isaiah 57:3-13, Ezekiel 16:32-41, Hosea 2:2-6. In those texts, the prophets accused Israel of spiritual infidelity, hardness of heart, and spiritual adultery.
- ***What Jesus says here also echoes what He said earlier in Mark's Gospel in Mark 7:6...***
 - "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;'
 - ***We must be very careful that we don't fall into the same trap of being this kind of generation.***
- ***The kind of generation that Americans have become accustomed to when it comes to believers. What have they come accustomed to?***
 - They've come accustomed to Christians not standing on the truth of the Word of God.
 - They've come accustomed to Christians confessing Christ but not living Christ.
 - They've come accustomed to Christians and 'Bible Believing Churches' look more like the world than they do.

- ***Church family, if Christ has saved you, do not be afraid to confess Him and proclaim Him.***

- It's time that we surrender, and give it all to Him.

Conclusion:

- As we close tonight, are you walking so closely with Jesus, that you live in the shadow of His Cross?
 - ***Living in the shadow of the Cross is no longer the spotlight of your own self saturated selfishness.***
- During this invitation, it's time that you die to self, if you have not done so already.
 - Maybe you died to self, but self keeps coming in and taking the spotlight...
 - ***Tonight, it's time to confess to the Lord that you want to walk so closely with Him, that you live in the shadow of the Cross.***
- **Truth #1: *Self-Denial.* (v. 34)**
- **Truth #2: *Suffering.* (vv. 35-37)**
- **Truth #3: *Surrender.* (v. 38)**