

**The Most Important Answer
To Life's Most Important Question
Mark 8:27-38**

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. ³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." 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. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life 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? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

The Gospel according to Mark is written in two halves and this section ends Act One in Mark's presentation of the real Jesus.

Chs 1-8 are intended to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

Mark 4:41 - Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

First: I am a King on a Cross 31

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

a) The Son of Man – Jesus's favorite term for himself

Daniel 7:13 - "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man,

Every NT writer connects Jesus with the God of the OT because Jesus makes himself the God of the OT.

b) Must

- I've come to die
- I have to die

A throne won't defeat evil but a cross will.

(Let that thought serve as the foundation of your conversations with people with whom you disagree).

The cross is the epitome of helplessness and shame. It was the exact opposite of a throne.

But Peter rebuked Jesus like Jesus rebuked demons

c) Suffer – The Jewish interpretation of a king was someone who would rescue them from their Roman oppression.

- We don't often know what we need rescuing from.

Like the Romans, we think Jesus has come to rescue us from anything that makes us uncomfortable or causes us suffering.

- But we don't often know what our real suffering is.

Christ has come to rescue us from real suffering of Hell.

The world was right when Adam served God. After that, power became the means to life. But after Jesus perfectly served God to death, it reversed the template for power back to its original design.

Suffering is the means by which God made the world right.
Suffering is the means by which God makes your world right.

Second: My Followers Go to the Cross Also 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.

a) Get a new identity by losing yourself

36 - For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Every culture says, *"If you gain this, you will be somebody. This is the world to us."*

- Family
- Career

Identity is performance based. If you gain the whole world, you still won't have an identity. If you can lose any of these things, you lose you. Everything but grace comes and goes.

He's not saying, *"Shift from one performance-based thing to another."* *"Now I'll read my Bible, go to church, etc..."* No life has ever been changed based on the will. It's God's grace that changes our lives.

Jesus says, "Base your identity on me."

The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up your self, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

- C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

b) Get an new agenda based on God's will - 32-33

³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Christ's cross means a cross for Peter and Peter's agenda is NOT the cross.

There is only one God and there can be only one God.

Jesus is a king, and you can't negotiate with a king.

What is the great kingdom ethic?

Matthew 26:39 - *...not as I will, but as you will."*

c) Get a new hope in God's Kingdom - 9:1

Did you really think that FB is your friend? That Twitter, run by fallen humans with their own agenda, is fair? To think that any human institution will promote Christianity is a false hope that can only lead to disappointment.

Disappointment is built into the system. Every other love will disappoint you. God intends it so. That may seem cruel but it is the only way to turn you to the one love that won't disappoint you. Cruelty would be to let something temporal satisfy you only to eternally betray you.

In Christian practice it is worth noting that in this season of cultural displacement in the Western church, the 'exilic' voices of the Old Testament take on a new authority and pertinence, among them, the lament tradition that was never needed before in the Western tradition that characteristically enjoyed hegemonic (ruling or dominant in a political or social context) support and favor.

Walter Brueggemann in *The Land*

The Bible never speaks to Christians as a majority. It is written to a people who live as a persecuted minority. But we have tended to exchange the truths about living as citizens as God's kingdom for citizens of our own country.

Our anger and/or surprise about governmental or private institutions betraying our confidence reveals how much confidence we placed in human mechanisms to save us.

'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

- Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*

If you betray Jesus by putting your trust in something else or giving your love to something else, it will betray you.

God is reminding us that we are "sojourners and exiles" (1 Peter 2:11)

Conclusion: Eternity's ethic is set by the King who created the kingdom. His ethic is loss to self for gain of self. It is not only that nothing else will get you to heaven. Nothing else will satisfy you now.

The most important answer to the most important question is "Jesus is God." He is our King, and our ultimate allegiance is to him. That should change everything for Christians.

Community Groups:

- 1 – How are you doing in this pandemic world?
- 2 – Where are you struggling most?
- 3 – Where are you finding your greatest joy?
- 4 – What did Jesus say about himself in Mark 8:31
- 5 – Why did he call himself the "Son of Man?"

- 6 – From the perspective of the cross, what is real suffering?
- 7 – What does Jesus mean by Mark 8:34?
- 8 – How do we lose ourselves?
- 9 – What does it mean to ‘take up your cross?’
- 10 – How do we apply the cross personally?
- 11 – How might we apply this cross mindset to our workplaces or any human institution?
- 12 – Why did Peter, and why do we, find the cross so offensive and/or hard to live?
- 13 – What is an exile?
- 14 – What does it mean to live as an exile?
- 15 – Discuss the line, “*All things betray thee, who betrayest me.*”
- 16 – How has the American church betrayed Jesus?
- 17 – What mental and practical adjustments do Christians need to make in this post-Christian world?