

MARK 8 V 31-END

In the reading from Mark Jesus predicts his death for the first time. He starts by telling the disciples that the Son of Man would suffer many terrible things before His death. The name for Jesus, Son of Man, is Jesus' most common name for himself. It comes from Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. "I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed".

He follows this by telling them that "He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead".

He spoke plainly about this in verse 31. This was the next stage in their education. They have made the confession as to who Jesus is, now Jesus began to teach them what was going to happen to him. It is like a teacher who can proceed with the next stage of a subject when the class has learned certain basics. The next lesson was not that there might possibly be danger ahead, but that Jesus was determined to walk straight into it. He was going to certain death. What a crushing message! How flat the disciples must have felt hearing these words . . . "must suffer . . . be rejected . . . must be killed . . . and after three days rise again" – what could that all mean?

This wasn't what Peter and the others had in mind. They may not have thought of Jesus as a military leader, but they certainly didn't think of him going straight to his death.

Peter, in verse 32, took Jesus aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. Although Peter could have been speaking on behalf of all of the disciples, he wasn't considering God's purposes but his own desires and feelings. If Jesus had said, "Yes I am the Christ, and there's going to be a tremendous fight on our hands in the next few years, but let me tell you this, lads, the end of it all is going to be triumph!" then Peter could have accepted that and remained sitting with the other disciples murmuring his Amens.

When Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "Get away from me Satan, you are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." He could have been including all the disciples, for none of them understood why Jesus would suffer or what he meant when he said he would rise again in three days.

The reading then tells us that he called to the crowd to join his disciples as he explained to them what they would need to do to follow him. Jesus used the image of the cross to illustrate the submission required of his followers. The people knew what it meant to take up the cross. Death on the cross was a form of execution used by Rome for dangerous criminals. A prisoner carried his own cross to the place of execution, signifying submission to Rome's power.

What does this though mean to us today? To take up our cross? To follow Him?

The phrase “follow me” means “to be a follower or companion, to be a disciple.” It has the idea of actively seeking fellowship with Christ and reflecting His likeness. We are to seek after the Lord with a desire to become more like Him in our daily life.

When you follow Jesus it means putting your own self-survival on the backseat. The first act of following Jesus is totally re-ordering your priorities and principles to the way of the His. It’s no longer about saving your life. Clearly this involves a personal choice. “To desire, to resolve, or to determine.” The first thing we must do is determine in our hearts that this is our desire. This is a deliberate choice, a determined resolve to follow Christ.

I don’t know what you want in life, but I want to live a life that pleases God. There are times when I can do this fairly well, but there are others when my resolve isn’t what it ought to be, times when I fall from God's path. I/ We must make a daily, conscious decision to follow Christ and serve Him

This isn’t an idle task; we can’t follow Christ without action. It will require effort and work on our part. The body has no desire to follow Jesus and he certainly doesn't promise us an easy trouble free life, with good health and easy living. There will be many obstacles that we have to face, but we must be determined to overcome them, He does promise not to put us through trials we cannot cope with.

The light in our world would be much brighter if believers would simply follow Christ. Keep in mind that we must first make that conscious choice, deny ourselves, and take up our cross before we can follow Jesus. Salvation through Jesus was a free gift, but living for the Lord requires sacrifice. Are we willing to pay the price for the needs of our day?

Mark 8:35 – Jesus says "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save

it". I know this world looks at us and wonders why we do what we do. Why would anyone deny what some would say are the pleasures of this life? Why do we give of ourselves for the cause of Christ? Why do we refuse to embrace the ways of this world and go against the grain? For this is what we should, at times, be doing.

I'm glad that I have more than what this world has to offer. There is pleasure in this life, but it is only for a season. There is coming a day when all will stand before God. The only thing that will matter is our relationship with Christ.

Christ will return just as He said; and when He does, He will judge us on how we have lived, what is in our heart, and the choices we make today could very well have eternal implications.

Mat.19:29 – And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life

Let me encourage you to consider what you have in Christ. It will all be worth it when we hear our blessed Lord say well done, enter in to the joys of my house.

Lord Jesus, we believe that you have called us to follow you with our whole hearts in all our words and actions. Help us to take up our cross and follow you.

Amen