

## **Mark 8:34-38**

### Gaining by Losing

Hey good morning church. So very good to be with each of you today – to have you worshipping with us this morning as we continue our time of worship through the Word of God. If you have a copy of God’s Word today – I invite you to go ahead and turn with me to Mark 8. If you’re using a device, my encouragement is to turn to the CSB translation – that’s the translation I teach and preach in.

Today mark’s about the halfway point in Mark’s Gospel. There are 16 chapters – and after today we’ll be half the way through. All the while, the Holy Ghost, through Mark’s pen, has been painting this picture of (1) Who Jesus is, and (2) how we should respond. And today’s passage is one of the clearest and concise statements of how we should respond found in the pages of this book. Found in Mark 8, Luke 9, Matthew 16. Similar statements found all throughout the pages of the New Testament. Turn with me to Mark 8:34-38

### **READ Mark 8:34-38**

<sup>34</sup> Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? <sup>37</sup> What can anyone give in exchange for his life? <sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

### **PRAY**

We have in these verses, one of the clearest calls to respond to Jesus – how we should respond to Jesus. And He starts with IF ANYONE– and it’s an open invitation. Not like the kid that can only invite 5 people to their birthday party or whatever. Jesus’ invitation is open – He says IF ANYONE WANTS TO FOLLOW ME.

### **An Open Invitation**

And to be clear God does not need you or me. It’s not like He’s incomplete without us – like Tom Cruise in a football love story movie saying to Renee’ Zellweger – you complete me.

But God desires for us to worship Him – to love and obey Him – to completely submit to His Word and His Spirit. And the path to love, obey and worship the Father is through following Jesus. And Jesus starts with this stunning proposition – IF anyone wants to follow me.

Now, right up to this point it sounds pretty good. Don't have to worry about being sick. Don't have to worry about eating, not only did he feed the 5,000 he also just fed the 4,000 in Mark 8. Just follow after Jesus and he'll handle it – we got the Jesus health plan (no copays or doctor visits) and we got the Jesus meal plan. Sounds like a pretty attractive invitation. If anyone wants to follow after me...But the attractiveness of this invitation to the crowd quickly wears off when Jesus shows them the way. It starts with self-denial.

## **The Way of Jesus**

### **Self Denial**

The way of Jesus, the path to following him is a path of denying yourself. Your desires, your dreams, your plans all are subject to the ways of God, and His work in the world.

When our culture is screaming be true to yourself (whatever that may be today) – the way of Jesus is to deny yourself.

It means that we trust Jesus not just to save us from our sin – BUT we also submit to Him as LORD! It means he calls the shots – all of them. It means that we trust in His character as revealed in His Word. It means that we trust in His good design for all areas of our life. It means wherever our desires are out of step with God's good design – we deny our desires and we trust in His good design – for every area of our life.

As we deny ourselves – we become consumed with the glory of God, the greatness of Jesus – and we put to death the self-centered person that we used to be as we find great joy in the Jesus-centered person that we become. And it's not hyperbole, not an exaggeration to say that the Way of Jesus requires a death sentence for the old self

### **A Death Sentence for the Old Self.**

If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross...

Taking up a cross – Interestingly in Luke's record of this – in Luke 9, the Holy Ghost decided to add the word "daily" – and I think we need this as a daily reminder (somedays multiple times throughout the day even).

Now the word cross – like we use the image of the cross lots of ways – but rarely do we think of it as an instrument of torture. We put it on stuff, jewelry, pictures, outside of church buildings, inside of church buildings, there's one embossed on the front of my Bible. The cross is SUPER important – because without Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection – we'd be still slaves to sin. But we need to think through the context here of how the crowd would have heard the word cross. They would've had no classification for jewelry and religious devotion. They would have immediately thought DEATH!

It was perhaps the most excruciating form of execution ever created. So awful, the Romans were the ones doing the crucifying, so awful a form of execution that Roman citizens were

exempt from this type of death sentence. The purpose wasn't just to kill someone, it was to draw out their death, and torture them as they were dying. A horrifying way to die.

And I read this week, that during Jesus' earthly life, the Romans likely executed by crucifixion about 30,000 Jews during Jesus' earthly life.

So when Jesus says here – take up your cross – he's calling us to die (for most metaphorically but for some physically). Taking up a cross isn't just bad circumstances that happen to you – it is literally putting to death the old Paul. Dying to self.

We see this imagery in other places in the New Testament as well

- Paul wrote "I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live I live for Jesus – who loved me and gave himself for me"
- Later he would write "You have crucified the old man with his practices and have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of his Creator"

See, the way of Jesus, is to deny yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus. This is a picture of paying any price for the joy of life with Jesus.

### **Follow Me**

Follow me – so much implied in these two words. No GPS. Not all of the answers. We know how the story ends, but we don't know what the details in between hold. BUT, we know and trust who's leading the way.

We follow Jesus in ongoing, consistent obedience. And for real here – **obedience matters**. This idea that how you live doesn't matter – that's a lie straight from the pit of hell. All throughout the scripture, there's a priority placed on obedience – not to earn anything, or to play the "I'm better than you" game – but out of a heart that loves Jesus, out of a heart that trusts the goodness of God – out of a life that has been so incredibly gripped by the greatness of Jesus that we choose to obey even when it's hard, unpopular and costly.

### **To illustrate this – Jesus points us to the reality of Gaining by Losing.**

Re-Read V35-37

- We can be consumed with what's in front of us – and our own selfish desires. Always trying to find the easy way, or the better way, or the way for the most money or power or control.
- We may save our skin, but we will lose our soul.

But the way of Jesus – whoever loses FOR HIS SAKE AND THE GOSPEL – will save it. The way of Jesus requires a cross – death to our selves, and life with him.

**The Great Exchange → Our life for His! Life in Christ**

There's this great exchange – we lay down our lives for the way of Jesus now – and we find meaning, purpose, joy in Christ today and forever.

### **Whoever is ashamed**

Re-Read V38

When we see Jesus' words here – he talks about being ashamed of Him. And I want us to understand this verse – that Jesus isn't talking about a momentary failure that you repent of – he's talking about a life of rejecting and denying Him. And this can look like a lot of things in people's lives – whether it's a rejection through general indifference to Jesus (meh...) or a more open rejection – it doesn't matter. For all who reject Jesus in this life – you will be rejected in the day of final judgment.

**So where do we land** with today's verses – this whole idea of self denial, cross-bearing, and following Jesus (as a side – this isn't super-special Christianity, this is basic Christianity) – but where do we land?

1. Honestly examine ourselves – are my desires in line with the purpose of God in the world? Or perhaps a better questions – where are my desires out of line with the purpose of God in the world?
2. What idols in my life have I allowed (or even encouraged) to grow? John Calvin said the heart is an idol factory – and he was right! Idolatry kicks in when we take good things (kids, grades, work, leisure, etc) and make the ultimate things.

### **The Only way this makes sense – Treasuring Jesus**

The only way this makes sense – living a life for the glory of God – dying to ourselves and following Jesus – the only way this makes sense is if we hold Jesus as the great treasure of our life. Worth giving everything for. Worthy of all of our life – not just part of our life.

### **Read Matthew 13:44-46**

<sup>44</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then **in his joy** he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

<sup>45</sup> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found **one priceless<sup>[k]</sup> pearl**, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

We have to see Jesus as our greatest treasure (not stuff, or health, or relationships or reputation, or whatever) Jesus is our greatest treasure – and until we treasure Jesus, none of this will make sense at all.

As I was preparing this week, I was reminded of the quote from a missionary named Jim Elliot. You may be familiar with his story. He and several others set out to take the gospel to the Acua

of Ecuador in the mid 1950's. They had strategies for establishing contact, and plans. Months of preparation. They knew the potential cost – the men's families and wives knew the cost.

Once they landed, they had protocols for radio based check ins. Well, they missed one, so they sent a rescue mission to see if they could find the 5 missionaries. They found 4 dead bodies, and 1 missing. And while tragic this loss on earth was, here's what Jim Elliot said before the trip, knowing the risk to both himself and the others – knowing the risk before the trip he's quoted

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”

**PRAY.**