

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 9TH–10TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS (MARK 8:34–38)

Jesus has just revealed to His disciples that God's plan for the Messiah and the Kingdom would involve suffering and death.

- That same suffering would play a role in the lives of all His disciples as well. But the ultimate reward will far outweigh the cost.
- Many people want to follow Jesus, but they want to do it on their own terms.
- Jesus gives us HIS terms for discipleship.

FOLLOWING JESUS REQUIRES DYING TO SELF (V. 34)

Jesus is not offering you self-help or some religious practices you can adopt while you stay in control and manage your own agenda.

- The call Jesus issues is for self-denial, surrender of your own agendas, and a wholesale embrace of the cost of discipleship.
- Taking up a cross was a death sentence. It means dying in surrender to His authority.
- We live in a world that tells us to obey our indulgences, appetites, whims, and desires.
- But Jesus tells us that to be a disciple, we first must strip ourselves of self-lordship.
- We give up our self-righteousness, self-indulgence, desires, ambitions, thoughts, dreams, and possessions. We lay them down at His feet and let Him be Lord over them.

TRYING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE WILL CAUSE YOU TO LOSE IT (V. 35)

Self-preservation, self-centeredness, self-promotion, and the self-trusting mindset Jesus warned us about (v. 15) are actually how you lose your life.

- The desire to stay in control, keep power, and preserve your reputation leads to spiritual death; surrender to Jesus leads to eternal life.

The great paradox of life is that if we spend all our energy focusing on this life here and now, we will lose the entire point of this life, which is living for God's glory and investing in eternity.

- What does it benefit anyone to gain EVERYTHING this world has to offer and end up never entering the Kingdom of God? (v. 36).
- Nothing in the universe is more precious than eternal life in the Kingdom with God!

LIVING FOR THIS WORLD WILL COST YOU ETERNITY (VS. 36–38)

This world with all its alluring offers of living for the self (comfort, applause, gain, pleasure, etc.) can never give you anything of eternal value.

- You can gain everything this life offers and still lose everything that truly matters.
- There are eternal consequences for refusing Jesus in favor of the things of this world.
- There is a temptation to be “ashamed of [Jesus] and [His] words” when we are living in an adulterous and sinful generation that values self-rule, self-indulgence, and self-centeredness.
- If we reject Jesus out of shame for Him and His words in this life, He will be ashamed of us and reject us in the life to come.

TWO PATHS

1. The Temporal: saving our lives—living for ourselves, our desires, and simply for what is here and now.
 - It is easier—the path of least resistance—but it is ultimately meaningless and leads to loss and destruction.
2. The Eternal: the Kingdom of God—denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, and following Jesus.
 - It is harder, unpopular, and requires faith and sacrifice, but it ultimately provides satisfaction and fulfillment, in that it glorifies God and invests in what is eternal.

“FOLLOW ME.”

Where was Jesus going? He was going to a cross, then the grave, and then resurrection life, glory, and exaltation in Heaven.

- That is where He has invited us: to crucify our selves, our sins, and our desires on the cross, and then to follow Him into resurrection life and eternal glory in the Kingdom of God.
- He calls us to walk in His footsteps. Will you?

TRANSFIGURED (MARK 9:1–12)

Since the conversation on suffering and death may have been overwhelming for the disciples, Jesus assures them that some of them standing there would not taste death until they “see the kingdom of God come in power” (v. 1).

- Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to a high mountain for an experience that fulfilled that promise (v. 2).

On the mountain, Jesus reveals the glory of His Kingdom as He is “transfigured” before these three men (vs. 2–3).

- The word transfigured is related to the English word “metamorphosis,” and it carries the idea of a change on the outside that comes from the inside.
- In other words, Jesus’ glory was not reflected but radiated from within.

Two additional figures appeared with Jesus in His glory: Moses and Elijah (v. 4).

- Their presence is symbolic of the two primary divisions of the Old Testament. For most Jews, Moses represented the law, and Elijah represented the prophets.
- Here they are talking with Jesus in His glory!
- But what were they talking about? Luke’s Gospel gives us a bit more detail.
- Luke 9:30–31, ESV

In the Exodus of the OT, the Father used Moses to deliver Israel from slavery.

- Now the Father will send Jesus to deliver His people from slavery to sin and death.
- As Jesus in all His splendor and glory discusses these matters with the two most respected figures in the entire Hebrew Bible, Peter pipes up and begins to offer his suggestions for what needs to happen next.

The mountain top seemed a long way from the suffering in the valley of death. Could they not just stay and put up some tents?

- As Peter is suggesting his plan for what Jesus, Moses, and Elijah should do, a bright cloud overshadows them and the voice of God the Father interrupts him (v. 7).
- Peter is told that he is to listen to the word and directives of God’s son, Jesus.

As quickly as the glory of the transfiguration begins, it ends. As they come down from the mountain, Jesus orders them not to tell anyone of this experience until after His resurrection from the dead (vs. 8–9).

- But what does Jesus mean by saying that He will “[rise] from the dead” (v. 10)? The disciples are quite confused.
- They are also very confused about Elijah.

They had been taught that Elijah would come first to prepare to establish the Kingdom (Mal. 4:5–6), so they were probably wondering if his presence on the mountain was the fulfillment of this prophecy.

- Jesus responds with “Elijah does come first,” as Malachi 4:5–6 promised, but spiritually speaking, Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist (v. 13).

The problem was that the people of God did not recognize him and “did whatever they pleased to him.” They rejected and ultimately had him killed (v. 13).

- Just as the people had mistreated and killed the Messiah’s forerunner, so they would treat the Son of Man (v. 12).
- Jesus’ mission of redemption would be accomplished through His suffering and death.

HELP MY UNBELIEF! (MARK 9:14–29)

Jesus, Peter, James, and John come down from the mountain to a scene of commotion and chaos.

- There is a great crowd gathered with some scribes, and an argument is taking place with the disciples who stayed behind (vs. 14–16).
- Jesus’ disciples (who supposedly have authority in His name) have failed to cast out a demon (vs. 17–18).

A father has brought his son to Jesus’ disciples because the boy is tormented by a demon intent on destroying him (vs. 17–18, 22).

- Yet, Jesus’ disciples could not drive it out (much to the delight of the scribes, apparently).
- Jesus is frustrated by all the unbelief He is witnessing: the timid disciples, the contentious scribes, the doubting father (v. 19).

When the boy with the demon was brought to Jesus and “saw Him” (the demon saw Jesus), the demon knew his time was short and began to convulse and throw the boy on the ground (v. 20).

- As Jesus asks this father about the situation at hand, the man responds with doubt.
- “If you can do anything...”—the man is unsure if Jesus could do anything (v. 22).

When we come to a challenging or difficult situation, it can be a lot easier to focus on the crisis at hand than on God’s power to work in our impossible situations.

- When we see and trust God for who He is and know His promises are true, all things become possible—He can do anything!
- Even the strongest faith is often intermingled with the weakness of our doubt (v. 24).

It is okay to bring our doubts and weaknesses to God in prayer. Jesus can take it.

- Not only can He take it, but He can also give us more faith to believe and help us with our unbelief.
- Jesus casts the demon out of this boy in a dramatic fashion, and as the dust settles from this chaotic event, His disciples are perplexed. Why couldn’t they drive out the demon? (v. 28).

“THIS KIND...” (V. 29A)

Kind (“genos”) often refers to a genus, category, or class of beings (including spiritual ones).

- For whatever reason, this particular demon was more resistant and more deeply entrenched than others.
- Not all demons are the same. They have different roles, assignments, attack plans, strategies, and modes of operation.

“...CAN COME OUT BY NOTHING BUT PRAYER.” (V. 29B)

Spiritual authority requires spiritual preparation. True spiritual preparation for spiritual battles comes from a prayer-dependent, deep communion with God and reliance on Him.

- Disappointment in your own ability is an indication that you were trusting in yourself.
- “New levels, new devils”—what worked back then might not work now. Stay spiritually ready.

WHEN SELF CANNOT SAVE

- Eventually, almost every person will inevitably come to certain points where their own self-rule, self-reliance, and plans for life just do not seem to work anymore.
- When we come to the end of our selves, where will we turn? To a different version of the same strategy? Or to the One who can do all things and offers a better way?

WHEN THE WORLD’S OFFERS FALL SHORT

- Money, power, fame, pleasure, comfort, convenience, and applause/acclaim are alluring. But even if you got all of that, without Jesus, you would still come up short.
- You can gain everything this life offers and still lose everything that truly matters.
- There are eternal consequences for refusing Jesus in favor of the things of this world.

THE GREAT SPIRITUAL CROSSROADS

- Follow Self: living for yourself, your desires, acclaim, comfort, and your own version of happiness. This path is easier, but it WILL lead you to meaninglessness and loss.
- Follow Jesus: dying to self, crucifying your sin and sinful desires on the cross, and living out Jesus’ version of abundant life. This path is harder, but it WILL lead you to eternal and abundant life.