

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 10TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS (MARK 8:34-9:1) "IF ANYONE WANTS TO FOLLOW AFTER ME..."

Jesus had just told the disciples how He will suffer, be rejected, and die on a cross. As if that was not hard enough to hear, Jesus tells the disciples that they will do the same.

- By saying, "**if anyone wants to follow after me,**" Jesus asks about the **individual's desire to submit to Him** and then ensures the individual is informed about what following Him means.

"...LET HIM DENY HIMSELF..."

To follow Jesus means to follow in **His perfect example of denying oneself**. To deny yourself is different than self-denial.

- Self-denial is when we give up things or activities, but denying ourselves is when **we completely surrender ourselves to the will of God**. When we die to ourselves, it means **we have been freed up to live for others**.

"...TAKE UP HIS CROSS..."

When Jesus tells His disciples to "**take up [your] cross,**" He is not saying we are to start a journey of mild discomfort. He is inviting His disciples on a one-way trip to execution.

- Our culture has reduced the cross to a piece of jewelry, a bumper sticker, or a religious symbol, but in Jesus' time, it was **an unrelenting means of death**.

"...AND FOLLOW ME..."

It is **impossible to live a resurrected life without dying first**. Many never experience a resurrected life because of an unwillingness to crucify the flesh, die to our selfish ways, and follow Christ into a new life that is others-focused.

- **Only through our spiritual death and resurrection into a new life are we able to become what we were intended to be.**

IT IS ALL RUBBISH COMPARED TO CHRIST

We may choose not to follow Christ and gain all this world has to offer, but failing to submit to the one who created everything will cause us to lose it all.

- Even if we lose it all here to follow Christ, we have **gained something infinitely more valuable** (Philippians 3:8). Have we come to a place where **things we once valued seem worthless in comparison to what we have gained in Christ?**

"THE SON OF MAN WILL ALSO BE ASHAMED OF HIM"

Jesus tells His followers that at His return, those who were **ashamed of Him and His words** will be judged accordingly.

- Following Jesus is not only death and crosses, but it is also power and glory. Jesus promised His disciples that some would see **a glimpse of the power and glory of the Kingdom of God** before they died.

THE TRANSFIGURATION (MARK 9:2-13) "...JESUS TOOK PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN..."

Knowing it would be easy for His disciples to lose confidence after telling them He was going to the cross and they would spiritually follow Him there (8:31, 34-38), He took the same three who were at the raising of Jairus's daughter from the dead (5:37) "**up a high mountain by themselves to be alone**" and "**was transfigured in front of them.**"

"HE WAS TRANSFIGURED IN FRONT OF THEM"

Jesus revealed the ongoing miracle of containing the glory of God in the flesh of a humble man. His glory was revealed in such a bright light that Mark (*according to Peter*) says His clothes became whiter (*purity*) than anything seen on earth.

- The word "transfigured" describes **a change of the outside from the inside**. This was not a **light shining on Jesus but from Him!**

THE CROSS IS NOT THE FINAL DESTINATION

He displayed His glory as King over all of God's Kingdom to assure the disciples that He knew what He was doing. Even in His suffering, rejection, and death, **He was still in control**.

- This shows those who are willing to take up their cross that **the cross is not the goal but the path that leads to the goal, which is the glory of God**.

THE GREAT CULMINATION

Elijah and Moses appeared on the mountain with Jesus discussing what He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

- Moses represents the **Law and those who died and went up to glory**, and Elijah represents the **Prophets and those caught up to glory without dying**. We see **the sum of the OT** meeting with Jesus, as well as **evidence of life beyond this life**.

PETER'S REQUEST

Peter's desire was to stay put, build some tabernacles, and **dwell in the presence of the glorified Jesus all the time**.

- His desire was not wrong, but his timing was off. The time had not yet come to dwell in the presence of Jesus because there was a work He came to accomplish. **Peter's request would inadvertently stop Jesus from His mission**.

"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON; LISTEN TO HIM!"

The voice of God from the cloud of glory confirmed for them that the plan for **redemption through the cross** was **approved by the Father**.

- This exchange had such an impact on Peter that he wrote about it in one of his letters (2 Peter 1:16-18), discussing **the confidence he had in who Jesus was**.

THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND

The three disciples did not understand when Jesus told them they were **not to tell anyone about what they had seen until He "had risen from the dead."** They also did not understand **how the Messiah could come before Elijah**, unlike what was prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6.

- Jesus told them that Elijah had come, possibly in the person of John the Baptist.

UNBELIEVING GENERATION (MARK 9:14-29) LEAVING THE MOUNTAIN FOR A VALLEY

Jesus and three of the disciples left the mountain, only to come down to the scribes arguing with the other disciples about their unsuccessful attempt to cast a demon out of a boy.

- The boy was mute, deaf, and showed symptoms of epileptic seizures because of demonic possession, but **this does not mean all sickness is demon possession**.

"I DO BELIEVE; HELP MY UNBELIEF!"

It is possible that the disciples' failure caused doubt in the father's mind about whether Jesus could heal his son.

- His doubt was not a sign of rebellion or rejection of Jesus. He sought out Jesus. Believing He could heal his son but recognizing his doubt, **he asked Jesus to help him in his unbelief**. Before healing the son, **Jesus healed the father**.

"I ASKED YOUR DISCIPLES... BUT THEY COULDN'T"

Jesus had given the disciples authority over unclean spirits (Mark 6:7), so why was this particular case too difficult for them?

- Jesus told them the reason was due to a **lack of prayer and fasting**. Jesus is not saying that the strength of a Believer's prayer is the magic key that will open doors to healing.

TOTAL DEPENDENCE

The word "fasting" is not in some manuscripts, but for the Believer, fasting should go in tandem with prayer.

Prayer and fasting draw us closer to God and are an expression of total dependence.

- The disciples' weakness was that they had started to rely on their own power. Jesus gave them authority and told them **they could do nothing apart from Him** (John 15:5).

FOLLOWING JESUS

- Following Jesus means we will follow Him wherever He leads.
- Jesus will never ask us to go somewhere He has not gone. He goes before us and with us.
- Jesus will never ask us to do something He has not already done.
- Jesus meets us in our discouragement, fear, and doubt.
- Following Jesus led the disciples to the top of a mountain and then immediately down to the disputes of scribes, the desperation of a father, and the discouraged disciples. Are we willing to follow Jesus to mountain tops but not into the valleys?
- **Are we expressing our total dependence on God through prayer and fasting?**