

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 10TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

DISCIPLESHIP (MARK 8:34-9:1) "IF ANYONE WANTS TO FOLLOW"

After predicting His suffering and death, Jesus instructs everyone around Him to listen carefully.

- They have been following Him all around the Sea of Galilee, and now He will reveal the difference between following Him around and following Him as the Messiah.
- **At some point, we will have to decide if we will be Christ followers or Christ watchers.**

DENYING SELF

This part is often misrepresented as self-denial. Jesus is not saying they must deny who they are; He is saying the opposite.

- A Christ follower must recognize their selfishness and willingly follow God's will.
- **Many will turn away because it seems like a great loss to surrender ourselves to Christ. It seems unsafe to let go of what we know and feel about the most important thing, us.**

THE CROSS

Jesus shares that a follower must take up their cross (daily).

- At that time, the cross meant death. It also revealed surrender to an authority.
- It does not mean bearing life's troubles. It is obedience to God's will and accepting the consequences of following Him.
- **Jesus just tells us the truth: There may be inconvenience, difficulties, and suffering as we follow Him with our lives.**

THE PARADOX

After the image of the cross, Jesus shares the save vs. lose paradox.

- At the core, if you seek to preserve yourself from the inconveniences and difficulties that come from identifying with Jesus, you will lose out on the abundant life that Christ promises.
- **If we choose to just be Christ watchers because it seems easier, we will miss out on a relationship with Him now and for eternity.**

ASHAMED

In verse 37, Jesus makes it even more clear that choosing the ways of the world is equivalent to denying Him and the life that He offers.

- To be ashamed of Jesus is to reject Him.
- In return, when Jesus comes in glory to claim His own, He will reject those who rejected Him.
- **Love of self and fear of others hinder many people from following Jesus. Are we ready to confront their struggles with humility and community?**

"WILL NOT TASTE DEATH"

Jesus ends the teaching with a reassuring statement: There were some in His presence who would see the very power of God's Kingdom BEFORE they died.

- They saw the transfiguration—we can see more.
- **Jesus is not keeping Himself hidden from us. As disciples, He is with us every day. As we "take up [our] cross" and follow Him, we recognize His presence and become a part of His plan to reveal Himself to the world.**

GLORY (MARK 9:2-13)

"A HIGH MOUNTAIN"

Jesus takes these three disciples where they will see the Kingdom power that could not be defeated by evil elders, chief priests, and scribes. Peter especially needed to see this.

- Many still believe that a "mountaintop" experience is needed to reconnect with Christ.
- **This was before the resurrection. We do not have to go to a mountaintop to connect with Him. We can connect with Him any place and any time. Although, humble prayer is a good disposition to have when we are truly seeking Him.**

DAZZLING CLOTHES

As Jesus allowed His glory to shine through His humanity, it gave the appearance that His clothes became the cleanest, whitest garments ever made.

- This sight should have been so captivating that they could not take their eyes off of Jesus.
- **The disciples were still limited in their knowledge of WHO Jesus is and noticed the outside more than the true essence of Christ. Then, they made the mistake of putting their eyes on Moses and Elijah.**

PETER INTERRUPTS

We are not given much information about the conversation between Jesus, Elijah, and Moses.

- Traditionally, we see Moses representing the Law and Elijah representing the Prophets as Jesus is in complete agreement with both.
- Peter, like many of us, babbled senselessly when he was scared, and we probably should not look for some deep theology in his words.
- **Sometimes, it is better to stay focused on the glory of Christ rather than try to sound righteous.**

MY BELOVED SON

Peter spoke in fear, then God interrupted with power.

- God's words, not Peter's, are the center of this passage.
- God calls Jesus His beloved Son (again) and adds that they should listen to Him.
- The vision was inspiring, but what brought focus was the word of God.

- With the voice of Peter silenced and the others removed, the disciples were ready to focus again on Jesus.

"COMING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN"

Leaving the mountain did not mean leaving Jesus.

- Jesus ordered them to tell no one until after He had risen from the dead. Although they did not understand, they kept the event to themselves until after the resurrection.
- They still had questions about Elijah because prophecy said that Elijah would come before the Messiah.
- **We may have been around a long time and seen a lot of things, but there is still much to learn. Jesus welcomes our questions.**

ELIJAH

When Jesus says that Elijah has come, He is talking about John the Baptist.

- He shares that John was rejected and the leaders did whatever they pleased to him.
- Just like John, Jesus would suffer, be treated with contempt, and be killed.
- **The disciples still had much to learn. They lost sight of Jesus on the mountain and had to be silenced, then doubted Him in the valley and had to be corrected. Are we willing to receive what God will do to teach us?**

POWER (MARK 9:14-29)

AN ARGUMENT

When Jesus and the three reconnect with the other disciples, they walk up on an argument.

- Someone had brought their demonized boy to be healed, and the disciples could not do it.
- The disciples were powerless, and the father's faith was limited.
- **Jesus did not dismiss the need, but He did take an opportunity to teach. Sometimes, we may need to stop and hear the lesson that He has for us before we lose focus and our faith weakens.**

HOW LONG?

Jesus responds to the situation with more rhetorical questions and seems emotional as He reflects on His disciples' spiritual dullness.

- His next words were reassuring: "Bring him to me."
- **When Jesus calls, He works. Just hearing Him say those words should have been enough to bring peace to the crowd.**
- **Do we realize that when Jesus calls us, He is about to do something in us, to us, and through us?**

"IF YOU CAN?"

The father's faith is revealed when he says to Jesus, "If you can."

- Jesus repeats his statement to show that the point was not His ability to heal the boy but the father's ability to trust in God, who can do what is humanly impossible.
- **The father's response brings out an essential element of Christian faith: It is possible only with the help of the One who is its object.**

WHY DO WE FAIL?

After the mute and deaf spirit leaves the boy forever, the disciples wonder why they failed.

- They had failed because they had not prayerfully depended on God's power. It seems that they had trusted in past success to the extent that they believed more in their power than God's.
- **Prayer is not just talking to God; it is remembering who He is, what He has done, and what He can do. Prayer gives us perspective.**

DEBT

- We all owe.
- **It is impossible to live without some type of debt.**
- **Our greatest debt is to our Creator. We owe Him our very existence. We also have a sin debt because we have chosen to live in violation of His righteousness, holiness, and glory.**

CURRENCY

- Debt has to be paid for reconciliation.
- **We do not have the required currency.**
- **It is not that we do not have enough; we simply do not have any of it. Jesus is willing to pay the price and has already balanced the books. Salvation is available for all who will believe.**

WATCH OR FOLLOW

- Jesus gave Himself for a reason.
- **When we look at what He did and continue living without a desire to conform to His example, we are still seeing at a distance. Avoiding surrender is not following!**
- **There are no discounts. When we follow Christ, we will be changed. It will cost us something, and it will be the only eternal investment we will ever make.**