**Jesus and Peter, Part II**

**The Word**

Read together Mark 8:27-38

**The Big Idea**

This passage marks a critical turning point in the ministry of Jesus as he begins to relay that his messiahship will mean service, suffering, and death rather than power and fame. Following Jesus means following in the way of service and humility on the road to ultimate glory.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Jesus’s words to Peter, “You do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns,” showed him that his view of the Messiah was shaped more by the world than by God. Where in the church today do you think we have adopted views on life or ways of living that are more shaped by the world than by God? Where do you struggle with that personally?

2. Consider v. 34 as a personal call from Jesus to you: “Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me.” As you prayerfully consider that, what are some specific ways you might tangibly answer that call at this time in your life?

3. In many cases, Jesus took a fairly severe approach to discipleship, telling people about the full costs of discipleship right up front. The church in America has generally adopted a softer approach, inviting people into the grace and love of God first and then potentially communicating the costs over time. What do you think of that approach? In what ways has it been appropriate and fruitful, and in what ways has it been unhelpful?

**Digging Deeper**

Read Matthew 11:28-30. How might we possibly reconcile Jesus’ claims that his yoke is easy and his burden is light with his call to deny ourselves and take up our cross?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Jesus and Peter (v. 27-33)

A. After seeing his ministry in action for some time, Jesus is stepping back and getting a sense of what the crowds and his disciples think about him.

B. Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ is a high point. In Matthew’s version, Jesus acknowledges the divine origin of Peter’s confession: “Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.” (Mt. 16:17)

C. Jesus’ reaction to Peter’s confession must have been confusing. But now that his disciples have identified him as the Messiah, he begins to let them in on what it means for him to be the Messiah.

1. He warns them not to tell anyone

2. He defines his Messiahship not in terms of power, authority, and fame but in terms of service, suffering, betrayal, death, and ultimate resurrection.

D. Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes him

1. Everything Jesus just said about his Messianic ministry goes against Peter’s Jewish expectations.

2. Peter has the right category/title in mind (Messiah), but he does not have a kingdom understanding of that category.

3. “Get behind me Satan”: Peter’s understandable perspective is actually Satanic in origin, and his words to Jesus represent the same temptations towards power and fame that Jesus dealt with in the wilderness with Satan.

4. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Again, Peter’s perspective is entirely reasonable from a worldly perspective, but sometimes God’s ways are very different from the world’s.

5. Consider the double healing of the blind man in v. 22-26. Like him, Peter is kind of seeing clearly (he recognizes Jesus as Messiah) and yet not seeing clearly (he doesn’t recognize what being Messiah means for Jesus).

6. Likewise we can have the categories right about Jesus and Christianity but still be blind to the way God’s kingdom actually works (not through power and status but through humility, love, and sacrifice).

II. Jesus’s words to all (v. 34-38)

A. The call of discipleship (v. 34)

1. Two simple words: “Follow me!”

2. Peter would hear this same command at the beginning, middle, and end of his relationship with Jesus. The call remains the same.

3. This is the second time he’s heard the call to follow, and now he’s been given clarity on where Jesus is headed and where he is headed if he is to follow Jesus: a life of love, service, humility, suffering, ultimate glory.

B. The cost of discipleship (v. 34)

1. “ Deny yourself”

= say no to, give no regard to

2. “Take up your cross”

a. In the first century, crosses have absolutely no spiritual or religious associations. Crosses are simply what Rome uses to execute criminals.

b. So crosses are images of death. To pick up your cross is a way of saying you need to die to yourself. Every day you need to accept the death of yourself (your agenda, comfort, safety, reputation, etc.)

c. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die”

3. Denial and death are not the goals, following Jesus is. But these may be necessary on the way.

This can happen in radical ways, but it also can happen in very mundane ways. In fact, every single day we are presented with opportunities to deny/die to ourselves in some small way in order to follow Jesus (our comfort, pride, reputation, control)

c. The cost of non-discipleship (v. 35-38)

1. Notice Jesus broadens our perspective beyond this life to eternity

2. Saving and losing your life (v. 35). Ironically, trying to keep your life safe and secure in this life, rather than following Jesus, will mean you lose that very life for all eternity. And losing it for Jesus sake means saving it forever.

3. Consider the relative worth of gaining the world in this life time vs. losing your soul for all eternity (v. 36-37)

4. Consider the issue of being ashamed and what audience you live for (v. 38)

We can be ashamed of Jesus in the presence of sinful people, but then he will be ashamed of us in the presence of God and the holy angels. Or we can honor Jesus in the presence of sinful people, and he will honor us in the presence of God and the angels.

III. Conclusion

A. There is a cost to following Jesus, and there is a cost to not following him. Once we see those alternatives clearly, following him will be the only reasonable thing to do.

B. Consider the parable of the man who found a treasure in a field and was willing to lose all his possessions in order to buy the field. It was the only reasonable thing to do.

C. How do we sit with this passage?

1. The temptation may be to imagine a life that is radical, dramatic, and extraordinary (e.g. sell our homes and move to Africa to serve) and so utterly disconnected from our own.

2. But instead, what if we started with the small and daily opportunities we have every day to follow Jesus, to love like him, and to deny ourselves in the process?