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TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Mark - Lesson 8E

Chapter 8:34-38

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- In our last session, Jesus concluded a private discussion with Peter, by way of a Divine Rebuke.
 - And this rebuke came about because Peter’s mind was not set upon the things of God (heavenly things) but upon earthy things.
 - Peter’s focus was more tethered to power, influence, and a current earthly rule alongside the Messiah than that of a suffering King, now.
 - However, Jesus saw fit to recorrect Peter’s understanding in effort to ascertain the Messiah’s proper mission and purpose.
 - For, to fail to understand Jesus’ need to die in His first advent was to fail to understand the power of the Gospel.
 - The power of the Gospel is found perfectly in the suffering of the Promised One.
 - Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 that what is of first importance in understanding the Gospel is to know Christ and Him crucified, being buried, and raised from the dead.
 - And it is Paul that makes this point clear to the church at Corinth because Christ had made the point plainly clear at this point in His ministry.
 - You might recall Christ expounded on His unique mission right after Peter made the great confession that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, by the leading of the Spirit.
 - It is this clear distinction of Christ being Messiah that God’s means of salvation would be known versus what the people were anticipating.
 - And it would be in having a proper identity of Christ that the disciples would now need to have clear understanding of Messiah’s mission.
 - As we have made clear before, Christ’s first coming was not what the people nor His disciples anticipated. (Why?)
 - They were expecting a military conquest, rule, and power over the Gentile rulers in an effort to establish Jewish rule of the world.
 - However, the Father’s plan was to prepare the people to receive the Kingdom which would not be based upon one’s Jewishness.
 - It required that man be made right before Holy God.
 - The reason being was man’s means of attaining righteousness was impossible without the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit activating the hearts of men.
 - Without God’s illumination and intervention, we could never reach God’s perfect standard of Holiness, which is perfect perfection.
 - To be off, even the slightest bit, failed the litmus test of holiness according to the Father’s standard.
 - On top of that, the means of being made right before God required an internal calibration and transformation.
 - It required one to be “born-again” and the only means by which that could be done was by God transforming the hearts of men.
 - This type of transformation could only be accomplished from the inside out.
 - Therefore, for one to be saved and receive the Kingdom, as previously discussed

in the Mark series, required one to “Repent and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:14-15).

- If you remember, the word Repent (Capital R) in the Greek is the word *Metanoeo*, which means to have a “change of mind”.
 - This is where one abandons their former dispositions which results in a new perspective, outlook, and understanding.
- So when one comes to Christ, they have abandoned their means of prior understanding and system of thought of what it means to be made right with God.
 - And in turn, by the illumination of the Spirit comes to the realization that the only way that one can be made right is through the Father’s righteous person – The Messiah, the Son of God.
 - And what becomes so beautiful in this reality is that the effort and the work is solely placed upon God having provided the means!
- Therefore, for one to come to salvation – there is only one way. And that is that salvation is found in Christ alone, by faith alone, through grace alone.
 - Friends, our faith has an object, and that object is a person and that Person has done a work that only He alone could achieve perfectly.
 - This is the work that Jesus has expressed explicitly and specifically to His disciples.
- That missional work of Christ required Him to die so that, those who would come through Him, in faith, would be saved by His work alone.
 - And not our measly attempts, external striving and efforts and the like, but solely Christ’s work.
- This is what the religious leaders were missing and could not get because they were blinded.
 - They had become their own “gods” in a sense – establishing their own “authoritative truth” (The Oral Law).
 - They had established exterior works, to make one seem to be righteous, from an exterior perspective, while all the while they were rotting from the inside out.
- So with that recap, as to where we have been from Mark 7 to this point, we now find ourselves arriving to verse 34.
 - It will be here where Jesus begins to address both His disciples and the crowd that has followed them at this point.
 - And Jesus is going to address this crowd of both insiders and outsiders in a unique way.
 - Therefore, one can safely assume He will be speaking in parabolic form.
- And what we will discover tonight is that Jesus will be teaching a lesson regarding this unique distinction between one being saved and one becoming a disciple.
 - The question that will have to be asked tonight is: “Have you counted the cost and if not, will you count the cost of being a disciple?”
 - If I were to put a tag on tonight’s text it would simply be: “A Cost worth Counting”

- With that being said, I invite you to open your bibles and meet me at Mark 8:34-38.

Mark 8:34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Mark 8:35 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.

Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:37 For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 8:38 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.”

- Let’s Pray.
- Rhea Miller wrote a hymn in 1991 entitled, “I’d Rather have Jesus” which was composed by George Shea. Listen to the first sonnet of the song:

**I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold
I’d rather be His than have riches untold
I’d rather have Jesus than houses and lands
I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.**

**Than to be the king of a vast domain
Or be held in sin’s dread sway
I’d rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.**

- Such truth spoken within the first few lines of this song.
 - That the cost of Christ is much greater than this world’s mere delight.
 - May we see the beauty of this truth as we walk through each verse to mine the reality of the text.
 - Let’s dive into verse 34.

Mark 8:34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

- We find Jesus here addressing the crowd and His disciples as He begins to establish this clear distinction between that of Salvation and Discipleship – and we will see it graphically momentarily.
 - Jesus begins to establish what discipleship is but beyond that what discipleship

costs.

- He states “If anyone wishes to come after Him..” that they must do the following:
 - 1. Deny themselves
 - 2. Take up their cross
 - 3. Follow Christ
- Jesus makes it clear here that Discipleship requires much consideration for one to become a true disciple of Christ.
 - He explains this cost consideration by first mentioning the denial of oneself.
- As we approach what Jesus is saying here, we must recognize what Jesus has just mentioned privately to the disciples as well as what He is saying with the crowd here.
 - In verse 33, Jesus had just finished calling Peter “Satan” because Peter sought not to understand Jesus’ purpose for dying, but rather to emphasize his own means of self-promotion.
 - This ultimately resulted in Jesus getting Peter “back in line” in an effort for Peter to set his mind on heavenly things and not earthly things.
- Therefore, Peter’s issue was not a matter of who His faith was in (Jesus Christ) but rather the means by which Jesus’ purpose would have to be accomplished.
 - Peter would have to abandon His understanding of what the religious leaders spoke about Messiah.
 - He would have to embrace what Jesus was teaching regarding His identity.
 - And as Peter would abandon His own ideas and perspectives of what Messiah would do, pertaining to His Purpose, the disciples would join in this coming suffering that came with being connected to Christ.
- Here is where we must truly understand the distinction between Salvation in Christ and being a Disciple of Christ.
 - Salvation in Christ requires one to have placed faith upon the Person of Christ and His work.
 - Salvation, as Paul mentions, rests upon Christ having died, been buried, and raised from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
 - Our faith rests upon what Christ has done – solely. God’s Son being crushed on the cross was the means by which salvation was achieved.
 - This is the only means by which one can be saved and is justified before God.
- Discipleship on the other hand goes beyond that first step.
 - If we were to put it a different way, salvation is the starting line.
 - Discipleship, however, requires one to take the next steps in fully identifying in the rejection that Christ faced and the suffering that He ensued.
 - In other words, Discipleship is joining Christ in His sufferings by willingly pursuing Him despite what it might cost us, socially.

Philippians 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the

surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, [Philippians 3:9](#) and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, [Philippians 3:10](#) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; [Philippians 3:11](#) in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- This is why we see Jesus begin by mentioning that one must deny themselves.
 - It requires that one, like Christ, considers the pleasures and fleeting fantasies of this world as loss in exchange for a worthy calling to pursue Christ.
 - We then see Jesus mention that those who seek to follow Christ must take up their Cross.
 - Now hearing this in the first century was literally being asked to take on a death-sentence gracefully and willfully.
 - Jesus’ use of this language here sought to “evoke a vivid and horrifying image of the death march with all its shameful publicity.”
 - In other words, to follow Christ was to be invited to come and die, literally.
 - And to the extent of which the journey of following Him cost, it meant that one needed to consider the temporary implications of their decision knowing that they were attaining something much greater beyond this life.
 - You might recall in our Mark 1A study, I mentioned the audience of this letter were Roman believers under the persecution of Nero.
 - And as these fellow believers faced death in the eyes, having previously read through Mark’s letter to them, I could only imagine that this section here was quite encouraging.
 - That these fellow believers were able to personally identify themselves with their Savior who had experienced what they were about to.
 - This goes beyond simply having a knowledge of death, but God in flesh, Jesus Christ, tasted death for a time in order to save us.
 - This blows every other religion out of the water!
 - Why? Because there is no other religion in human history that their “god” condescends to be with creation.
 - Therefore, this denial of self and taking up one’s cross was what one theologian called “radical abandonment”.
 - For to completely identify oneself with Christ’s death requires one to have their eyes set on heavenly things, eternal things. (Eyes for Eternity)
 - Christ goes into further discussion to bring this point to a closer focus. Check out verse 35.

[Mark 8:35](#) For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.

- It is in verse 35 that Jesus teaches, in parabolic form, that there is a profit/loss statement in following Him.
 - He provides somewhat of a chiastic structure to this teaching by mentioning:
 - Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it.
 - But whoever loses his life for Christ and the Gospel, will save it.
 - Now for us to understand what Jesus is speaking about here, we need to understand some terms.
 - One of those terms is the word here for life. That word in Greek is *psyche*.
 - It means soul, or the condition of living or state of being alive.
 - Therefore, as we understand this passage we must approach it in the literal sense in that what is being spoken of here is not related to salvific matters.
 - The reason why we can assume that is because the word “save” here in verse 35 is the Greek word *sazo* which means to deliver or rescue.
 - So what is Jesus talking about here regarding those who are wanting to follow Him or considering to follow Him?
 - Jesus is speaking here of heavenly matters, more specifically – eternal rewards.
 - So, if we were to put this another way, any saved individual not willing to count the cost and pursue the things of the Kingdom (heavenly things), suffers the loss of their eternal rewards.
 - However, whoever has counted the cost, seeks to identify with Christ and abandon the things of this world, will attain these eternal rewards which are found in a forever pursuit of Christ while here on earth. (Opportunities)
 - The matter at stake here is not regarding salvation for the believer, but matters of loss of rewards, as we mentioned before. (You can’t lose salvation)
 - When the believer is more focused on casual Christianity in the sense of simply “making it to heaven” yet without pursuing Christ richly, there is much loss in things of great eternal value. (Sanctification Issues)
 - There is also another thing that we must consider here which remains true for unbelievers and that is for those who do not respond in faith – they will not be saved.
 - The reality is that when one comes to faith in Christ, as Paul mentions in Romans, there are two competing things within the believer.
 - And that is both the flesh and the Spirit.
 - The flesh is warring against the things of God and is at enmity with the plans of God.
 - And the Spirit is at war with the flesh seeking for the believer to fully submit under the instructions of God.
 - As Pastor Steve mentioned prior in Matthew 16E: “Which dog are you feeding in the fight?”
 - To be a disciple of Christ requires the whole of the individual to be completely submitted under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - Every opportunity that God provides for you to serve Him is an opportunity to

earn the rewards prepared for you on the other side of glory. (Growth in Spiritual maturity)

- When we understand what Jesus is saying here regarding pursuing Him and the Gospel, we realize that our means to attain eternal rewards comes with a temporal cost of suffering just as Christ suffered.
 - The question becomes: Do you have what it takes to truly follow Christ to the fullest?
 - And the hope for every believer in Christ is that they move from simply having faith in Christ, to moving towards deep allegiance to Him.
 - If He is your King and your Lord, let your life reflect that reality!
 - Let's keep moving. Check out verses 36 and 37.

Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:37 For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

- We now get to Jesus' explanation of heavenly things in a hyperbolic way.
 - Jesus establishes here the measure of discipleship regarding the eternal versus temporal ramifications.
 - And He establishes this by means of a rhetorical question. Check out the question again:
 - “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul.”
 - As we mentioned earlier, Jesus was speaking to the believer's ability to focus on the eternal matters for the benefit of eternal rewards.
 - This statement becomes an extension of what I just mentioned, but in the negative position for believers.
 - In other words, what does it benefit a believer to pursue the temporal things of this life and in the end have nothing to receive for it in the Kingdom?
 - It is this principal of investment, when you think about it. What are you investing in?
 - If you invest in temporal things the only return that one will receive is temporal satisfaction – there is no lasting benefit!
 - What we should be able to see from Jesus' rhetorical question here is the significance of eternal matters.
 - This world's achievements, treasures, and pleasures pale in comparison to the everlasting riches of knowing Christ and receiving an imperishable reward.
 - Paul states this reality in 2 Timothy 4:8. Check out the text:

2 Timothy 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- Jesus wraps up the point by stating the eternal truth that all of humanity must face at the end of the age and that is: What will a man give in exchange for his soul (life)?
 - In other words, what will you have truly lost in wasting your time and resources with things that will one day burn up and cease to be no more? (1 Corinthians 3:11-14)
 - The key to true life and living as a believer is to lose your grip on what goes on in this life and begin to seek the present opportunities that allow you to make eternal investments.
 - Paul tells the church at Corinth this in 1 Corinthians 15:57-58:

1 Corinthians 15:57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

- ◦ John puts this reality a bit more bluntly for the reader in 1 John 2:15-17. Check out the text:

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

1 John 2:17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

- So, what is Jesus showing us here in Mark’s gospel regarding the measuring of discipleship regarding both the eternal and temporal matters?
 - The things of this world, as believers in Christ, may seem great, look great, and at times even feel great, but they are not good for the spiritual well-being of the believer.
 - Our true citizenship is found in Heaven! As the church mothers used to say growing up: “Oh baby, we are only passing through!”
 - Here’s the question believer: “Are you passing through or are you trying to set yourself a tent?”
 - Believers in Christ, you must be willing to deny the pull of the world in effort to pursue Christ all the more.
 - There is also another thing at play here and that is the finality of the unbeliever’s unwillingness and inability to know Christ as Messiah.
 - And that reality is: At the time of the appointed judgement, everything that they have done in opposition against Sovereign God will be held to account.
 - Friends, there is no escaping the judgement of God for both believers and non-believers.

- The only thing that separates these judgments is the fact that one group has placed faith in Christ and the other hasn't.
- Believers will face judgement for what we have done for Christ in this life and will have our works accounted for.
 - Non-believers on the other hand will have to account for what they have done and experience the consequences of their failure in trusting in Christ after He has been plainly made known to the world both verbally and visually – in person and through the proclamation of the Gospel.
- What a sobering reality for us to face!
 - We now arrive to verse 38.

Mark 8:38 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.”

- Jesus now moves to the culminating point regarding the reality of what it means to follow Him versus one who does not put their faith in Him. (Unbelievers)
 - He uses the term “ashamed” to build this tension in the text for one to recognize the commitment of being a disciple of Christ versus being an unbeliever.
 - The word “ashamed” in Greek is *epaischynomai* (e-pai-schyn-o-mai) which means to experience a sense of loss of status because of a particular event or person.
 - Because Jesus is speaking to both His disciples and this crowd, the question becomes: “Who is Jesus addressing here?”
 - Well based upon the context where we find ourselves, we can safely assume that this statement relates to believers.
 - And in this address, it also directs our attention to the opposite result for the unbeliever.
 - This relates to the believer in the fact that we would naturally have some sense of affection regarding our relationship to Christ because we have placed faith in Him.
 - No unbeliever would feel shame or sense of loss of status regarding Christ because their trust is not in Him.
 - So if the believer experiences some sense of shame in light of what Christ has done richly for them because their affections are more towards this world than the next, it results in a reduction of honor for that believer.
 - As RT France states in his commentary on Mark: “Shame here and now is a small price to pay for acknowledgement and honor then.
 - In other words, Jesus is saying: The loss is not in salvation (that is secured) the loss is in rewards.
 - There is an opposite result regarding that of the unbeliever here that is to be addressed and that is this:
 - The truth of Messiah and His message has been made plainly known to all through the scriptures and evangelistic efforts.

- God condescended into the form of a human being so that those who did not know Him personally could come to know Him.
 - He became our High Priest so that He may sympathize with the likeness of man, yet without sin.
- So to come to the light of this truth yet deny His Person and His work is to deny the very means of salvation which eliminates one from being saved.
 - The reality is, there will be a time when we all will face the Creator and have to give an account for our lives.
 - The question hearer is: “What will the end of your story be?”
- Will it be that you were sold out for Christ in pursuing His plans for your life and taking advantage of the opportunities He provided for you to serve Him and His purposes?
 - Or will it be that the world seemed a lot more attractive than the life that is to come? (Believer)
 - Or is it that you never believed resulting in a life with no hope ending in an eternity in hell separated from the Creator? (Unbeliever)
- Understand that the goal for every believer in Christ is to move you from spiritual immaturity to spiritual maturity.
 - To get you into the game means you are placing the things of God before your own pursuits and the things of this life.
 - And that you are seeking opportunities to serve the Lord now despite suffering for the Gospel.
- As Paul told young Timothy in His last account as his life was ending, he told him this: 2 Timothy 1:8-13.

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

2 Timothy 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

2 Timothy 1:10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

2 Timothy 1:11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

- Paul’s focus for the young Timothy and the church was that we all grow in our faith based upon what Christ has done richly for us and has done in us.
 - In other words, once you become saved, you don’t want to stay on a kindergarten level of knowledge of Christ.

- We are called to grow in the knowledge of Christ and that is found all the more when we continually die to ourselves in pursuit of becoming more like our Savior.
- The unfortunate reality is there are some who are in churches where they are comfortable remaining on milk.
 - But the Spirit desires to move men and women from the milk of the word to the meat of the word.
 - Because as we grow in our spiritual nourishment, our spiritual muscles develop, and we are able to understand how to suffer well with our savior.
- Suffering with Christ is not the requirement for salvation, but it is the requirement for discipleship.
 - Friends, the question on the table is: “Are you willing to count the cost and get in the game?”
 - Let’s Pray.