

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 23, Sight & Kingdom Cost

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Passage: Mark 8:34-9:1

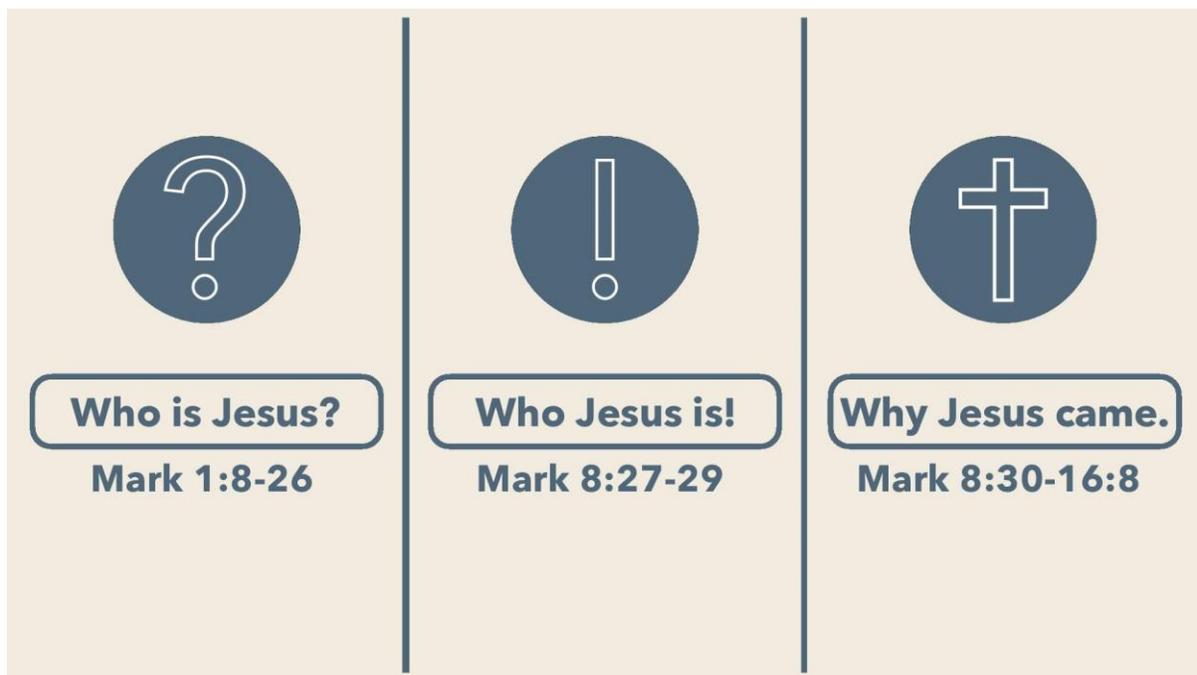
Big idea: Having Clarity about the Cost of the Kingdom is Essential for Every Believer.



There are 5 main themes found in the Gospel of Mark. Here is how they are laid out:

- Messianic Secret
  - This is how Mark writes to make the audience question - who is Jesus really? What is he doing? What is he saying? What does he mean by what he does and speaks? Why Does Jesus ask others not to express who he is? All of this is seen throughout the first half of the gospel of Mark, while the second half reveals Jesus proof that he is the Messiah.
- The Son of Man
  - This comes from Daniel 7, and is Jesus' claim that He is the long-awaited Chosen Prince, or Son of Man.
- The Kingdom of God
  - This is the upside down nature of the Kingdom of God revealed. The self sacrificing, self effacing, serve others, humble yourself kingdom.
- The Cost of Discipleship
  - This is what we will look at in this passage.
- Jesus is God based on what he does.
  - Jesus does miracles to prove who He is. The rest of Mark will reveal more of Jesus proof and statements that he is God.

The image below shows the movement of the gospel of Mark.



Mark has been building a case up until this point in his gospel. Mark 1:1-8:26 flows towards Mark 8:27-34 which is the half way mark in the book, and then the rest of the book flows from this half way mark.

# BIG IDEA

Having Clarity about the **Cost of the Kingdom** is Essential for Every Believer



As Christians, largely in our world today, we are mis-understood. We are generally seen as people who are ultra-conservative, who are hypocrites, who are more known (in large part due to our own issues) for what we are against rather than what we are for.

But, did you know that Jesus told us this would be the case, and is exactly what we should expect.

In this passage of Mark, we are going to see the deep call of discipleship, and its high cost.

<sup>34</sup> And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> For what can a man give in return for his soul? <sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”<sup>1</sup> And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

Mark 8:34-9:1

Mark 8:34, “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

Jesus regularly calls the crowd of people to himself. But if you notice in the gospels, Jesus generally does this when he is about to make some sort of significantly, or controversial statement. A statement that has the ability to split the decision on who he is.

Notice the shift from who Jesus is talking to, and what he was talking about. Jesus was talking previously talking to Peter and the disciples about his true identity, and what the purpose of the Messiah is, but now there is a shift towards the crowds of people and a statement of what it is to follow the Messiah.

“If anyone would”

Look at the inclusive nature of this statement. Jesus is saying ‘if you want to’, if you desire to follow, you can’.

“come after me”

This is the idea of walking in the steps of the rabbi. Students of Rabbi’s were to remain so close to their teacher that they should become covered in the dust of their steps.

In today’s terms, it looks like walking in the footprints of exactly where Jesus stepped. Doing exactly as Jesus does and did.

“deny yourself”

For me, this is the crux of the entire passage. From this statement everything else flows. From here our depiction of what Kingdom Citizenship looks like is formed. It is NOT about ME. It is NOT about YOU. It is NOT about US.

“take up a cross”

What does this mean?

Every single person in the ancient world knew what this statement meant. A person who would take up their cross, was about to be killed. Anyone who was bound to their beam of the cross, would be taking it up themselves. This was a spectacle of horrendous proportions.

The Romans did not just know how to hurt and execute a person. Many ancient scholars of both history and the medical persuasion agree that Crucifixion was the cruelest and most violently horrific death.

With the crucifixion of a criminal, they would be beaten & jeered at as they walked the streets, carrying their own cross beam as a public spectacle of shame and horror.

Everyone who saw someone going to a crucifixion knew that they would not be coming back.

As a pastor, I often hear statements like the following:

- This problem is my cross to bear.
- This difficulty is my cross to bear.
- This situation is my cross that I have to deal with.

Now while I understand the mentality of this, this is not what this passage is speaking about.

Jesus is calling his disciples to give up their lives for Him, for His purpose, for His honour, for His plan, for Him, in the same way that Jesus has told them that he has come to give his life.

Taking up our cross means that we actually do deny ourselves. Jesus is saying, to come to him you must be willing to risk it all, to give it all up, to know that you are not coming back.

Mark 8:35, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

If you lose your life for the sake of following Jesus, in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, your life will be saved. Not just here on earth, but for eternity.

Mark 8:36-37, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?”

What is the gain for a man if he were to attain rulership, ownership, lordship over the whole world (all of the earth) but trade his soul for this.

This statement more than anything, is a call to us western Christians, if there is such a call to make. Is the world, its pleasures, its toys, its goals, its systems, truly worth your eternity? Are these momentary things so elevated in our own hearts that they would in fact take the place of God in our hearts and minds?

Jesus is basically asking, why would you trade something of such great value for rubbish that fades? Why would you exchange the eternal for the temporal? Why would you forgo the opportunity of everlasting joy for momentary pleasure?

There is no profit in forfeiting your soul.

Then Jesus asks what can be traded for a soul. The obvious answer is nothing, but Mark wants the readers to connect the dots between this statement and the statement Jesus made about Messiah to his disciples.

Jesus has come as God's Messiah, the Son of Man from Daniel 7, means something very significant. Jesus' answer is 'you cannot trade anything for you soul, but I can, and I will'.

**“We are settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.”**  
*David Platt*

Mark 8:38, “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

**What’s the opposite of being ashamed of somebody? Being proud of them. Admiring them. Not being embarrassed to be seen with them. Loving to be identified with them.**  
*John Piper*

This statement is a reference back to the beginning of Mark 8:12, when Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees, and tells them this evil generation will be given no sign.

In the same way, if you deny the Lord Jesus by being ashamed of him in this life, so too will he show his denial of you in the next.

Mark 9:1, “And he said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.’”

This is a very interesting line in the text, and it has been debated for several centuries. The issue we are seeing here is the issue of where this fits, and what Jesus means by the Kingdom of God. Mark has placed this statement here to reveal that the Kingdom of God is everlasting.

**The Kingdom Cost Jesus His Life.**  
**(vs. 34)**

The most precious commodity that has existed is the holy blood of Christ.

Remember what we looked at last week. Jesus tells the disciples plainly, or clearly, that the mission of Messiah is to proclaim good news for those suffering, and to suffer in our place.

## **The Kingdom Costs Nothing we Cannot Afford to Lose.**

(vs. 36-37)

Anything that Christ has commanded or asked us to do away with, is for our good, benefit and flourishing. There is nothing in this world that can satisfy our heart's longing apart from Christ. So why would we look to other things to fill and satisfy us.

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**If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.**

*C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

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**If gaining that profit (The Whole World) happens at the cost of our souls, there is no profit at all. Rather, we have sacrificed that which is supremely valuable for that which is worthless by comparison.**

*R.C. Sproul*

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# The Kingdom Costs Us Love With the World. (vs. 35)

We cannot love the world and live inside of the Kingdom.

What does it mean to love the world?

1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

James 4:4, “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The Call of the Disciple is to be in the World but set apart from it.

There are a few things of significant note here.

1. If we are just like the world - What are we calling them to?
2. If we are just like the world - What right do we have to call them?
3. If we are just like the world - Can they tell the difference?
4. If we are just like the world - Will Jesus tell the difference?

Here is the real nature of this folks. Discipleship is HARD. Following Jesus is HARD. Being a person committed to the kingdom of God, putting God and others first, seeking to be of help inside of a broken system and a world that is against and opposed to God and the message of salvation, is not for the faint of heart.

We must count the cost of both following Jesus, and the cost of NOT following Jesus.

Oh, but what we gain!

Revelation 21:1-5, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

An everlasting Kingdom, a beautiful heavenly reality, perfection and glory, in the presence of God apart from sin, death, pain and anguish. Doesn't that sound good?