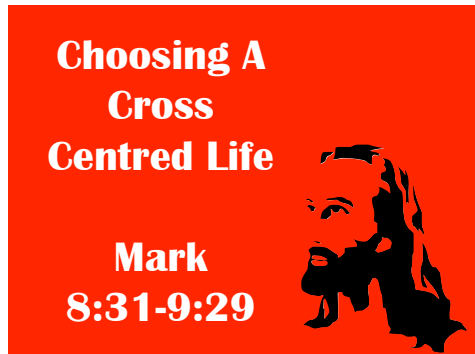


Choosing A Cross Centred Life (Mark 8:31-9:29 August 16, 2015)



On January 8, 1956:

Jim Elliot along with four other missionaries were speared to death on the banks of the Curaray River in Ecuador by a group of Quechua Indians.

They were armed – they could have defended themselves – but they chose not to. They literally laid down their lives.

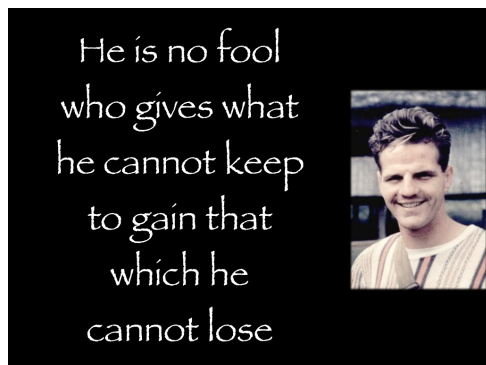
Why? Because this was an unreached people they believed God had called them to take the gospel to.

Jim Elliot was 28 years old, married, he had a daughter, he was an incredibly gifted man. Humanly speaking his death was a waste.

But God had other plans. News of these martyrs has inspired men and women for decades to go to the toughest unreached places on the planet.

Jim's wife Elizabeth took their daughter and went back to the Quechua and led many from that tribe to Christ.

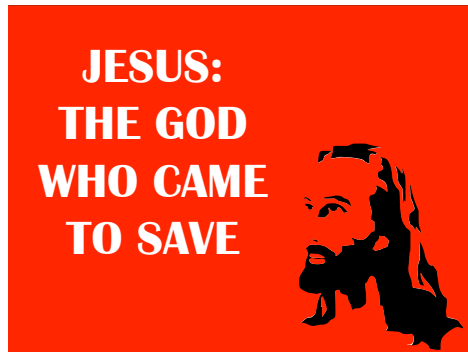
His journal entry for October 28, 1949 was this:



He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

This is the heart of this morning's message.

We are working our way together through the Gospel of Mark. We have seen that this book focuses on:



Jesus: The God who came to save

We are in the midst of a long section which reveals:

The heart of the gospel 1:16-10:52

What we have seen is that the heart of the gospel revolves around the question of **who** Jesus is. To this point in Mark we have seen that:

Jesus is Lord
Jesus is God

Last time we saw the disciples finally come to realise that Jesus is God when Peter uttered the declaration that Jesus is the Christ – the Son of the living God.

Remember, it is not as if this was the first time they had considered this possibility.

Ever since Jesus called them – they were asking themselves – just who is this man?

The great question on their minds was this – is Jesus actually the Messiah – the anointed One – the Christ?

When they looked at Jesus, there were things about Him that screamed ... **Messiah**.

Pros

- Miracles
- Prophecy
- Authoritative Teaching
- Holiness
- John the Baptist

But there many things that screamed *cannot* be Messiah.

Cons

- Not King
- Not Powerful
- Did Not Oppose Rome
- Poor, Galilean, Dubious Birth
- Opposed by Jewish Leaders
- Teaching Opposed Tradition
- Associating With Outcasts

They found it so hard to know what to make of Jesus.

The problem was the disciples had an ingrained idea about real power and authority which was at odds with who Jesus appeared to be.

The question we need to ask is this – when Peter said – you are the Christ – what do you think he meant by this?

Peter's reaction indicates that he thought Jesus would save – but that He would save through worldly power.

He would raise an army. Pulverise Rome. Crush His enemies.

Messiah was supposed to a warrior like David – perhaps some kind of Rambo Jesus.

They were expecting a Saviour with a sword – not a cross.

And if you had asked the disciples what the next event on the timeline of history would be *after* the coming of Messiah – there would be a bit of quibbling – but they probably would have expected this:

When Messiah does come He will crush His enemies and then set up His *earthly* kingdom.

You can understand why they thought that. Consider Malachi 3.

Malachi 3:1 – Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come.

Verse 5 – Then I will draw near to you for judgment.



When you read Malachi – the clear expectation is that when Messiah comes – He will usher in the final judgment and the end of the world. And when that happens the kingdom is established.

But, that is **not** the whole story.

Having allowed them to see that He is Messiah – that He is God – Jesus now has to teach them a truth that is *even* harder to grasp.

And that truth is that:

He is Saviour **8:31-10:52**

This would be fine if Jesus only came to save them by destroying Rome. But Jesus came to save them by destroying sin.

So the next thing to happen is *not* the power of the earthly kingdom – but the power of *suffering, sacrificing and serving*.

The time Messiah comes with a sword will happen – but not yet.

So the very moment the disciple's eyes were opened to the truth that He was God – He began to show them another incredible truth – that He was *also* Saviour.

Last time we saw Jesus perform a miracle of partial healing of a man's sight before He completely healed him.

The point was that the disciples had a partial healing of their spiritual blindness. Finally, they saw Him as Lord and God – but they will still need another miracle to see Him as Saviour.

And if this passage teaches us anything it is that if it is hard to see a man as God – it is even harder to see a suffering sacrifice as God.

Turn with me to Mark 8:31.

Let me set the scene for you. Peter has just made his great confession. Matthew tells us that Jesus responded with some incredible words:

Blessed are you ... On this rock I will build my church ... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Peter must have been psyched ... walking on air.

But you can imagine the shock when the next words out of Jesus' mouth were these. Mark 8:31–32:

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly.

What!!!!!!

Nothing could have prepared the disciples for this.

Notice two words here. The first is *began* and the second is *plainly*.

Up to this point – there have been some veiled hints about Jesus' death and resurrection.

In Mark 3:20 Jesus spoke of the days when the bridegroom is taken away.

In John 2:19 – Jesus spoke of destroying this Temple and raising it up in three days.

We can look back at these and we understand what He was saying – but at the time they were cryptic. The disciples missed the implication.

But from this point on – Jesus *begins* speaking *clearly* – I *will* suffer, die and in three days rise again.

And He speaks regularly about this. It becomes the centrepiece of the next section of His ministry.

But this truth that is so central to the gospel is so difficult to grasp that it will require a further miracle before they believe it.

To help us understand how difficult this truth is to grasp, I want you to note how Mark has structured this section. What he has done is construct **three** segments that say almost exactly the same thing in almost exactly the same way.

Jesus declares the true power of suffering, sacrificing and serving in salvation

He reiterates their importance in the plan of God

8:31-32a; 9:30-31; 10:32-34

He rebukes any who reject their centrality

8:32b-33; 9:32-35; 10:35-40

He reinforces the need for a crucified lifestyle

8:34-38; 9:36-10:16; 10:41-45

He reveals the difficulty of accepting this teaching

9:1-29; 10:17-31; 10:46-52

Three times Jesus states very plainly that He is going to suffer, die and then after three days rise again.

Three times we find the disciples rejecting this and Jesus rebuking them.

Then *three* times Jesus teaches them about the true nature of spiritual power – which comes through suffering and sacrificing and serving – basically through living a crucified lifestyle.

Finally, *three* times Jesus uses a miracle or a teaching to emphasise that it is only God who can make us understand the true nature of this power.

When you read this section – the question that jumps out is why does Jesus need to make the same point over and over?

The answer is – because although Jesus is very clear – they just don't get it. Humanly speaking, the concept of salvation through Messiah's suffering is beyond their ability to grasp. It is a spiritual truth that needs another divine miracle to open their minds to the truth.

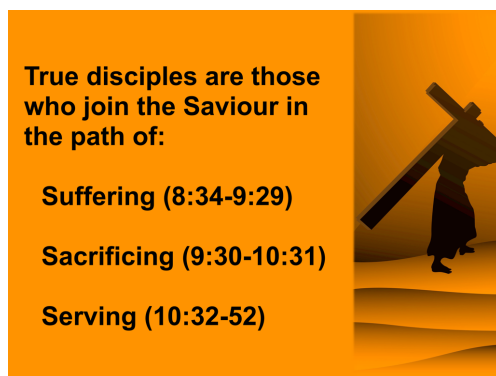
Mark keeps noting that they didn't understand what Jesus was saying.

They heard the words but they didn't register.

Perhaps I could put it this way. If the Bible were a story made up by men – there is no way the centrepiece would be God saving us by dying on a cross.

It is so counterintuitive that we have the truth reiterated three times – and they still don't get it.

I also want you to note that each of these three sections highlights a related but slightly different facet of what it means to trust Jesus as Saviour.



True disciples are those who join the Saviour in the path of:

- **Suffering (8:34-9:29)**
- **Sacrificing (9:30-10:31)**
- **Serving (10:32-52)**

It is the suffering, sacrificing and serving of Jesus that saves – but we demonstrate our faith that these unlikely traits will in fact save us by joining Jesus in them.

We choose to suffer, to make sacrifices and to serve as evidence we are His disciples.

Again – I trust you hear me. Our sacrifices **don't** save us – it is only His sacrifice that saves. You can give away everything, serve every day and not earn one iota of salvation. Only Christ can do that.

But we show our faith that His sacrifice saves us by choosing to follow Him in a cross-centred crucified lifestyle.

Today, we are going to look at this first section.

- **Suffering (8:34-9:29)**

True disciples follow Jesus in suffering.

Suffering!

Even saying this word should remind us how strange, how counter-cultural, how hard to grasp the gospel is when we share about the God who came to save to a lost world.

Who says follow me into suffering and expects anyone to listen?

These words are shocking. Which other leader says – join me in suffering?

Vladimir Putin is reputed to be the most powerful man in the world.

He portrays himself as a man's man. Powerful, not a man to oppose.

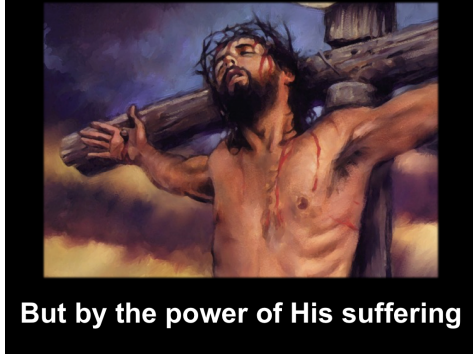
Now imagine that he called a press conference and said to the people of Russia, "As your President, I have come to believe it is my task is to suffer, be rejected and to die."

The Chechens and Ukrainians might rejoice but everyone else would think he had gone insane. Leaders triumph – not suffer and die.

And then if he said – **and** I call on you – my people – to join me in suffering – then you would be certain he had gone mad.

But that is what Jesus called us to do. Why?

Because Jesus is saying that true power – the power to save men from their sins is **not by the power of the world.**



But by the power of His suffering

Instead it is found in a totally different form of power – **the power of His suffering.**

The cross seems weak and foolish but it is the only power that can save.

This leads us to our first point.

Jesus reiterates the importance of suffering in the plan of God.

The disciples had finally begun to grasp the truth that Jesus is the Messiah – God in human flesh.

But then Jesus says – He will suffer and be killed at the hands of the leaders of Israel.

How do you process this?

- Who is capable of inflicting suffering on God?
- How can God die?
- Why does God have to die?

We who live on this side of the cross know why this is so crucial.

We know about Jesus' death and resurrection. We know we are sinners who deserve death. We know only the sacrifice of the sinless Lamb of God can pay for our sins. Nothing else will do.

To the disciples this truth sounded so wrong.

But, this truth is so crucial that:

Jesus rebukes any who reject the centrality of suffering.

Look at Peter's reaction in verse 32:

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

In Peter's mind these words of Jesus *have* to be mistaken.

Messiah conquers – He isn't conquered.

Messiah crushes His enemies – He isn't crushed.

Peter totally missed the necessity of suffering.

But Jesus responds – verse 33:

But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Satan would love to see a world without the cross. But in the plan of God – the cross has always been and must always be at the centre.

But why? Why is the cross so crucial?

The answer Jesus begins to unfold is this – only redeemed, saved, washed men and women can enter in to the kingdom.

In the time Jesus walked the earth – that total was zero.

Jesus had to redeem men **before** He could take them to heaven.

It is only by the cross that Jesus can save anyone.

Because God is just – He can't merely say – lets ignore sin.

The wages of sin is death. Sin requires punishment.

And the incredible truth Jesus is outlining is this – The One who is Lord and God – must also become Saviour. He must save His people by suffering and dying for them.

Only *then* can He set up His earthly kingdom.

So from this point in Mark, Jesus resolutely sets His face toward Jerusalem and the cross.

Then Jesus begins to:

Reinforce the need for a crucified lifestyle.

He begins by teaching that choosing suffering for His sake – is actually a sign that you have accepted His cross as the way of salvation.

Look at verses 34-35:

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. For

whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.”

We are so familiar with these words we can easily miss how radical and brutal they are.

Jesus doesn't say – One of the many ways to heaven is to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.

He says **the** way of the cross – this is the **only** way to be His disciple.

The way to join Him in heaven is to join Him in a crucified life.

When Jesus said this the disciples understood the metaphor.

The only people who took up their cross were those who were going to be nailed to it and killed.

You have to give up your life to lose it.

A crucified Saviour has crucified disciples.

Jesus is talking about choosing to make sacrifices for the kingdom – time, money, family, prestige and for some even their lives.

Peter struggled to understand the power of suffering. But later he came to embrace it. In 1 Peter 2:20–21 he wrote:

If when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Suffering is a gracious gift from God!

Christ gave us an example of real power – the power of suffering – and called us to follow in His footsteps.

Most of us think power comes from money, armies, possessions. None of those things have any power to save.

Jesus is telling us we have to choose a lifestyle that costs us – dearly.

Either we pour ourselves into getting the things the world says are power or we give them away as a show of faith that the real power is in the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus.

Philippians 1:29:

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

The word granted is the word for bestowing a gift.

Paul as well as Peter are saying – suffering is a precious gift from God for our good. Most of us read this and think – suffering doesn't sound like a gift I want. Let someone else have my gift.

It sounds much worse than the purple tie from your aunt gift.

But, Paul, Peter and Jesus would say – if you don't understand how great this gift is then you don't understand the cross.

It is in laying down our life – in choosing suffering – that we find real life. This is the power of the cross.

Of every area of the Christian life – I think this is probably my greatest struggle. I have so much – but I still want more. I struggle to lay down some areas of my life.

I can name the sacrifices I have made – but I also know there are areas of my life I struggle to crucify. Areas like pride, greed, pleasure.

I live well. I don't suffer much. In fact I do things to make sure I don't suffer too much.

I give a fair amount – but in some areas I give only till it *almost* hurts. I give enough that I don't really have to change too much about the way I live. Jesus wants more. And it wants it for our sake.

Every Christian who ever lays down His life has declared – this is real life – this is indeed a gracious gift from above.

We domesticate these verses.

Oh Jesus means – if it comes to it – if someone puts a gun to my head and says – deny Jesus – then be ready to lay down your life – but if it doesn't come to that – we don't have to make that call.

No! In the chapters that follow Jesus makes it clear – a crucified lifestyle costs – it costs everyone in terms of position and time and money and lifestyle – and for some – their life.

We must all lose our life to gain life.

Look at verses 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 if a billionaire came to you with this deal:

I need your kidneys – one for me – one for my wife – and I will pay – handsomely. I will give you one hour – live like a King – eat what you want – burn money – buy anything – do anything but in one hour I get your kidneys – and you die.

Deal – or no deal??

We would say – NO DEAL!!! You can't be serious? My life for one hour! My life is worth more than that!

But the truth is that is an infinitely better deal than the one many of us choose.

We strive to gain the things of this world for what is such a short time – and they don't even satisfy when we get them – and in choosing them over Jesus we lose our soul for eternity ... eternity!

Death is not ceasing to exist. Death is hell.

And even if you owned the world – you could not redeem one second of punishment in eternity.

Now – be honest here. What many of us do with this command of Jesus would be the equivalent in my illustration of saying this:

Both kidneys no. But I have a deal for you. I won't give you both kidneys – but I will sacrifice one – and for that I don't expect the world – just a very comfortable long life.

We think this is counting the cost.

We give God something that barely costs us.

We give Him a fraction of the time we spend on TV.

We give Him a fraction of the love we give to our families.

We give Him a fraction of the money we spend on personal luxuries.

We say no to a few minor things.

And then we think we have taken up our cross. We think this should suffice.

Be careful. Verse 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.

We can be ashamed of choosing to live poor, to take less prestige, to stand up for the gospel in a tolerant age. We can be ashamed to say – I believe the cross is power.

Be warned – if you choose the way of the world – money, power, self – when Jesus comes again – there will be no salvation – He will deny you then – if you deny Him now.

Don't allow your sin to sugar coat this. Jesus is giving us fair warning.

I was meditating on this verse in relation to my life – I think the Lord may have a few words to say to me about how I have lived in relation to counting the cost – but I won't be the only one.

Finally, we come to the section where:

Jesus reveals the difficulty of accepting this teaching.

The disciples *will* finally come to understand this truth – but it is so hard that it will take a miracle.

We start with the famous chapter 9 verse 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.”

There are so many views about what this means.

Let me quickly run through the *two* major ones.

One major view says that it is in the transfiguration of Jesus that the disciples see the power of the kingdom.

The fact that the transfiguration follows this statement in all three synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – gives credence to this view.

The idea is that in the transfiguration the disciples will see such power that they will finally begin to heed the words of Jesus about suffering.

However, even after the transfiguration the disciples struggled to see Jesus as a suffering Saviour.

And as well, saying some will not die till they see the kingdom come in power gives the idea that this event is quite some time away – but the transfiguration is only six days away.

It would be a strange thing to mean some of you will manage to still be alive in six days – and then you will see this display of power proving My words.

The other major view is the one I strongly favour.

This view says this is a statement that the disciples will finally come to understand the power of the cross when they see the kingdom come in power by seeing the death

and resurrection of Jesus. When the disciples see these events – *then* they will know the true power of suffering.

This fits the context perfectly. Jesus is talking about the fact that He will die and rise.

If you look down at verse 11 Jesus says – tell no one what you have seen, *until* the Son of Man had risen from the dead. It is at the resurrection they will see the power of God and finally understand the truth.

This saying then leads on to the transfiguration.

Look at 9:2–8:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

Here is my understanding of what is going on.

The disciples are struggling to accept Jesus’ words – so God gives tells them in no uncertain terms that Jesus’ statements about the cross are the *only* way.

Jesus peeled back his humanity and let His real essence, His divinity shine through.

His garments became brilliant white – literally they sparkled, and were whiter than any laundry process could ever make them.

In this divine display, Jesus testifies that He speaks the truth.

Then Elijah and Moses appeared.

Elijah was the preeminent Prophet of Israel. Moses was the Lawgiver.

The point being all the Word of God – the Law and the Prophets – testify that a suffering Messiah is the only Messiah.

But, once again Peter totally fails to get his head around what is going on and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

However you cut it – that is a strange statement.

If I saw Jesus transfigured along with Elijah and Moses – I doubt that my first thought would be – let me make you tents.

But Mark helps us out – he tells us Peter did not know what to say because he was terrified.

He just babbled the first thing that came into his mind.

It seems this was the month of Tishri, the month when the Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles – the Feast of Tents. So tents were probably in his mind and this strange statement just came out.

It would have been terrifying to see the glory of a holy God – so I think we should cut him some slack.

However, he still missed the point – the Law and the Prophets testify about a suffering Messiah – so believe it.

Because they were still struggling to understand – God the Father also testified.

A cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”

Yes He is going to the cross. Yes He will appear weak. But that is real power – this is My Son – **listen** to what He says!

But amazingly – despite the testimony of a transfigured Jesus, the Law, the Prophets and God Himself – they still didn’t get it.

Verses 9-13:

And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

Jesus says – tell no one about the transfiguration – *until* the Son of Man had risen from the dead. It is at the resurrection that they will finally understand what the transfiguration testified to.

But this only leads them to discuss what rising from the dead means.

They wonder why it is necessary?

Verse 11 shows their thinking – Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?

They are thinking of Malachi 4:5:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

Their thinking goes like this.

Malachi says Elijah comes right before the end.

We just saw Elijah – so the end should be about to come – the kingdom should be about to be set up.

So where does this dying and rising from the dead fit in?

Why is it needed if the end is about to happen?

They still don't get it at all. The testimony of Jesus, the Law, the Prophets and God Himself didn't get through to them.

Look at verse 12:

And He said to them, "Elijah *does* come first to restore all things."

You are not wrong Elijah does come first – and we know from many other places that Jesus is speaking of John the Baptist – the one who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Elijah has already come.

But then Jesus says – if you want to quote Scripture – what about the verses that say the Son of man will suffer and be treated with contempt?

Passages like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

If Elijah's coming leads straight to the kingdom – then where do these passages fit?

Messiah must suffer first – before the end.

In this way **all** Scripture will be fulfilled.

And not only that – it is not just the Son of Man who suffers – **all** who wish to follow Him will suffer – Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist and he suffered and died.

He was imprisoned and had his head cut off – that is a crucified lifestyle.

If you want to follow the Messiah – that is the path we must all walk.

What is the point? Jesus, the Law, the Prophets, God Himself, the life of John the Baptist – all echo the words of Jesus about suffering to enter the Kingdom.

But – incredibly – even after all of this the disciples are still struggling. We have to ask – what will it take for them to get it?

It will take another miracle whereby God opens their spiritually blind eyes.

Look at verses 14-29 – the account of the boy with the unclean spirit.

The question is why did Mark put this account here in the midst of a series of teachings on Jesus' death and resurrection?

The answer lies in the core of this miracle – the lack of faith of the disciples.

The story is basic. Jesus, Peter, James and John arrive back from the Mount of Transfiguration and find an argument going on between the Scribes and the other disciples.

A man had brought his son who was possessed by a demon that made him mute and casts him down.

Jesus had sent the disciples out before with the power to cast out demons. This father probably heard of this and brought his son to them.

But the disciples couldn't cast it out.

Jesus replies – O faithless generation.

Their root problem was a lack of faith.

The father asks Jesus to cast it out ... if He can. Jesus replies – all things are possible for one who believes.

The father cries – I believe – help my unbelief.

Jesus casts the demon out but the boy was left like a corpse – they thought he was dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and he arose.

The disciples then asked, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

The key elements to this event are the lack of faith of the disciples and the boy seeming dead but rising.

The language is that of dying and rising – it reflects resurrection.

Jesus used this miracle to teach a lesson.

The disciple's problem was a lack of faith in the plan of God. Jesus cast out this demon in a manner akin to raising the dead to show that they need to listen to the words of Jesus that He *will* die and rise again – and they need to have faith in Him.

They need to ask God to help their unbelief – to give them eyes to see and ears to hear.

This miracle is a lesson we need to ask God to give us faith to trust and follow the truth of Jesus as crucified Saviour.

To understand the power of the cross and the glory of the resurrection requires a work of God.

Don't misunderstand this. I am not saying we all need to see a miracle to believe.

I am saying the miracle is God making us believe that the cross is power.

Remember that even after seeing the cross and hearing of the resurrection – the disciples struggled to believe.

In Luke 24 we have the account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus had been killed and they were discussing it.

We had hoped that He was the One to redeem Israel.

It is three days since He died and some women of our company say He has risen – but we can't see how that is possible.

Think about this. Jesus repeatedly said He would die and rise on the third day.

He does die and rises on the third day. Witnesses declare to the truth of this – and still they can't believe it.

That is how blind and faithless they are.

And Jesus said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not *necessary* that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

The cross was necessary – it had to happen.

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Then, finally – Jesus works a miracle and He fully opened their eyes.

It took the death, resurrection and a miracle of opening eyes for the disciples to finally grasp the necessity of the suffering and cross of Jesus.

Only then did they choose to live a crucified lifestyle.

Brothers and sisters. Understanding the power of the cross takes God opening our blind eyes.

But perhaps even harder is *choosing* to follow Jesus by adopting a crucified lifestyle.

When I came to Christ – it didn't take me too long to understand the power of the cross intellectually. I know the cross saves.

However, over thirty years later – I confess I am still struggling to fully take up my cross. To show I really believe this by laying down my life.

I know Jesus did it all.

I know my sacrifice does nothing.

So it is tempting to let Jesus carry the cross alone. To give only the things that don't cost me.

Our sin means that everything inside us cries – me first. Get me more things – heal me – pamper me.

But when Jesus calls us to the way of the cross – sacrifice, suffering, counting the cost – to actually live the way He commands means an enormous sacrifice.

I think many of us – certainly including me – miss how radical this call is and how serious it is.

We need a divine miracle to show us the power of the cross, the power of suffering in our lives.

You can pray for me – pray that God would work a miracle to show me how to actually live this passage out in the comfortable, affluent West – where gaining the world seems like blessing.

Pray for each other – that as a church we would learn how to live this truth.

Examine your heart – have you taken up His cross? Have you laid down your life?

Have you been ashamed of these words of Jesus?

Will His return expose you?

Being Jesus' disciple requires a huge cost in lifestyle, life-choices and even life cost. Any other reading denies the force of this passage.

But as Paul found and Peter found and Jim Elliot found – and every Christian who heeds these words of Jesus has found – this is not loss – it is gain – it is indeed a gracious gift.

He is no fool
who gives what
he cannot keep
to gain that
which he
cannot lose



He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

Paul summed up this morning's message in these words from Philippians 3:10–11:

[I live such] — that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

I chose the cross – that I might live.

Amen!

Choosing A Cross Centred Life (Mark 8:31-9:29 August 16, 2015)

Main Point: He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

Read: Mark 8:31-9:29

- What is the difference between worldly power and spiritual power?
- What were the reasons the disciples struggled to see Jesus as the Messiah?
- Why could Jesus not set up His earthly Kingdom at His first coming?
- Why is suffering and sacrificing and serving the only way for Jesus to save us?
- Why is a crucified Messiah so hard to accept?
- In what ways are we saved by following in His footsteps of a suffering/sacrificial lifestyle? Why is this not salvation by works?
- Why does Jesus say almost the same thing three times in this section?
- How can suffering be a gracious gift for our good?
- What would your life look like if you took up your cross and laid down your life? How do we tend to get around the bluntness of this statement? What needs to change?
- What is the warning of vv. 36-37? How do we tend to get around the bluntness of these verses?
- What is the warning of v. 38? If we heed this warning – what should we do?
- What is the point of v. 9:1?
- What is the point of the transfiguration?
- What is the point of the discussion concerning Elijah/John the Baptist?
- Why did they still struggle to grasp this truth?
- Why is the miracle of the healing of the boy with the demon here?
- How do we come to live a crucified life?
- How can we pray for each other concerning living this way?
- How do we live the prayer of Paul in Philippians 3:10–11?:

[I live such] — that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

- Discuss this statement by Jim Elliot:

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.