

Gospel of Mark: Jesus Must Die, We Must Die

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[0 : 00] Let's ask God for his help as we look at his word together.

Father God, by your Holy Spirit, would you please open up our eyes so that we may see Jesus, that we may know who he is, that we may understand what he has done for us, and what it means to follow him.

Father, please, we ask that every one of us here this morning would encounter Jesus afresh, and that not one of us would leave this building without being changed, without being transformed by you.

We come with open hands because we are needy people and we ask you to fill us and to teach us. We pray this for your honour and for your glory. Amen. Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honour and recognition in case of success.

[2 : 04] Well, that was the advert placed in a London newspaper by the great explorer Ernest Shackleton as he looked for a team to travel to the Antarctic.

In reality, it was a call to come and die. Here in Mark's Gospel, Jesus called us to come and die. Look at verse 32. They were on their way up to Jerusalem with Jesus leading the way.

Jerusalem for Jesus meant one thing, suffering and ultimately death. It was the place where he would be executed and nailed to a cross.

No wonder the disciples were astonished while those who followed were afraid. Jesus leading from the front deliberately and intentionally walking towards his death.

[3 : 17] Now we struggle with that because, well let's be honest, we crave comfort. We desire safety. We want prosperity. We want health and wealth.

We want a Jesus who will say to us, hold on to your nice, private, material life. We want a Jesus who will say, I'm going to make your life easy and suffering free.

We really don't want a Jesus who says, come and die. But like the disciples, we need Jesus to teach us.

Look at the rest of verse 32. Again, he took the twelve aside and he told them what was going to happen to him. And what follows in this section is an invitation to come and die with Jesus.

First, Jesus must suffer for us, but calls us to die for him.

[4 : 36] Look at verse 33. He says, we are going up to Jerusalem. He said, and the Son of Man, that's Jesus, will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

This is my mission. This is why I have come. I have come to suffer and to die for you. Verse 33.

They will condemn him, that's Jesus, to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him, spit on him, flog him and kill him.

And three days later, he will rise. The physical suffering, the pain and the agony of Jesus was immense.

The deep lacerations caused by the barbs of lead on each strand of the whip. The twisted crown of nail-like thorns crushed into his skull.

[5 : 43] The punching, the loss of blood, the timber beam that he carries. The jagged nails hammered into sinew and bone, piercing feet and hands.

Naked. Hanging. Suffering. Dying. But that is nothing compared to the ultimate suffering.

Jesus refers to it a little later on when he describes what he must go through. Look down at verse 38. Jesus says in response to the disciples who thought they could do what Jesus was going to do.

Jesus says, you don't know what you are asking. Jesus said, can you drink the cup I drink? Or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?

Jesus said, can you drink the cup? Jesus said, can you drink the cup? The cup and baptism, well, they were word pictures of his death. The cup, on the one hand, was symbolic of God's wrath, his judgment, his fair and just response to rebels like you and me.

[7 : 01] The baptism, well, that was being forsaken, abandoned by God when he cried out on the cross, why have you forsaken me? As Jesus took my sin and your sin upon himself.

And Jesus is saying here, I drank that cup for you. I endured that cup for you.

Jesus died our death for us. Jesus suffered hell for us so that we don't have to. Now Jesus calls us to die for him.

Look back at verse 32. They were on their way up to Jerusalem with Jesus leading the way.

Verse 33. We are going up to Jerusalem. The way that I go is also the way that you go. The path that I take is the path that you must take.

[8 : 18] We are going up to Jerusalem. We must be ready to die for him. Of course, the death of Jesus is unique.

None of us can repeat that. That was a once and for all. But his way to the cross is the model and the pattern for my life and for your life.

You say, I can't do that. I can't live like that. Well, listen. If Jesus suffered the ultimate suffering for us, hell itself, that means we can face any suffering for him knowing that the worst has been taken for us.

And if Jesus died our death for us and was raised three days later to life, that means we can face even death for him knowing that we too will be raised to life with him for all eternity.

Verse 33. We are going up to Jerusalem. My way is now your way.

[9 : 38] You know, the only reason why we are here this morning is because people in the past have understood what Jesus had done for them and were willing to die for him.

Churches are never planted through comfort and safety. Churches are planted through suffering and dying.

Of course, we may not die because of persecution in this country. We certainly will if we go to other countries. But you know what?

Every time we face rejection or a little bit of hostility, perhaps from a friend or a family, whenever we're treated unfairly or misunderstood, all because we follow Jesus, don't we?

Don't we suffer? When we give of ourselves to people, when we invest into their lives and give and give and give a little bit more, and then it's thrown back in your face, doesn't a little piece of us die?

[11 : 00] The way to plant churches is to follow the way to Jerusalem. To walk the road, to stand and be amazed that Jesus suffered for us.

And in response, be ready to die for him. Second, Jesus becomes a slave for us, but calls us to be a servant for him.

Jesus becomes a slave for us, but calls us to be a servant for him. Verse 35, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him, Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.

Well, clearly, they have not understood the call to come and die. Verse 36, what do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked.

They replied, well, let one of us sit at your right and the other one sit at your left in your glory. Don't you identify with James and John?

[12 : 28] We all want the glory, don't we? without the suffering. Without the suffering. We want the prize, but not the pain. We don't want to come and die.

But Jesus reminds us of the way in which we must follow. Verse 39, Jesus said to them, you will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with.

Not that they will endure the same thing, but he's saying to them, if you follow me, you will suffer for me. In fact, in just a few years from those words of Jesus, James would be executed by Herod.

John would be banished to an island prison. They both came to see that the road to glory is always a way of suffering.

And we need to understand that. We've got a kind of sanitized, happy version of Christianity where we don't like danger, we don't like upset, we don't like suffering.

[13 : 47] That can't possibly be the way. But look at my life, says Jesus. Let me show you what it's all about.

Verse 44, he says to them, whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

I am the Son of Man, says Jesus. It was a title, a great prophetic title, one that meant the one with absolute power and supreme authority.

Jesus is saying, I am God's King, the Creator of the universe, the Ruler of the universe. I look after all things, but I do not demand to be served by you.

[14:49] Instead, I am willing to become a slave and die for you. That's why I've come. I come from my high position to take the very lowest position.

Why? Look at the end of verse 45. To give my life as a ransom for many. I give my life in exchange for your life.

With arms stretched out on the cross, Jesus is saying, I freely sacrifice my life. I take your sin upon my life to liberate you.

By becoming a slave who dies in place of us, Jesus sets us free from the consequences of our sin, from death and from hell itself.

He sets us free to live a new, radical kind of life. Now Jesus calls us to serve Him.

[16:05] Look at verse 42. Verse 42. Jesus called them together and said, You know that those who are regarded as the rulers of the Gentiles, the politicians and the leaders, they lord it over them.

And their high officials, the movers and the shakers, exercise authority over them. They want position and power, status and success, glory and honour.

And they'll go to any length to get it. Verse 43. Not so with you. Not so with you.

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

I can't do it. How can I be a servant like this? Well listen, if Jesus died as a slave for us and set us free for an eternal glory, that means we can give our life today whatever the cost to serve Him because we already have everything in Christ.

[17:37] Christ. We were singing about it. All I have is Christ. That's all we need so we can let go of everything else. He's given us everything. Churches are not planted because of clever strategies.

Churches are planted because they learn to be servants. That means we don't demand our rights. We don't strive for status. We no longer crave our comfort and our securities.

There's no longer any me. We become last. We become the lowest. Giving freely.

Giving our life. What will that look like for us? Well, students, for those who are at college, that might mean thinking not what great position can I get at the end.

What great big salary can I earn? But where can I go when I get my degree? What town is there that hasn't got a church?

[18:57] Or what place is struggling that I could go and live there and support and help them to plant a church? that's what it will mean. For those who are just a little bit older and perhaps have kids, the same applies.

Am I ready to go? Leave the stability of my nice home? My nice school where my nice children go? And leave my nice friends and start all over again.

Oh, but what about the kids? It wouldn't be fair to upset them. After all, we need to keep them settled. Our kids are the most adaptable creatures on the planet. They'll go anywhere.

They'll learn another language quicker than you. They're not the problem. It's us. But what about those who are retired?

Or thinking of retirement? settling down and spending their pension if they still have one? All those missed out holidays. Am I ready to invest it into the support of one or two people?

[20:16] All the free time I now have, will I give it to serve the local church? That's what it means for us all.

The way to plant churches. is to follow the way of Jesus. To be amazed as we walk the road that Jesus, the King, the one who controls all things, became a slave for you and for me.

And in response, that we would be ready to be a servant for him. third, Jesus gives sight to us, but calls us to follow him.

Jesus gives sight to us, but calls us to follow him. Look at verse 46. Then they came to Jericho, and as his disciples together with a large crowd were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, that is the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging.

He's a nobody, he's an outsider, nothing to offer, nothing to give, but yet he knows how to ask. Verse 47, when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, Jesus, son of David, literally, king, or Messiah, have mercy on me.

[21 : 55] Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet. Shh, he doesn't want you. But he shouted all the more, son of David, Messiah, have mercy on me.

He comes in absolute dependence, knowing he is helpless and hopeless. And look at the response of Jesus, verse 51.

Look at what Jesus says in response, verse 51. What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked him. It's the exact same question Jesus had asked the disciples a little earlier.

but the request of Bartimaeus is so different. The blind man said, Rabbi, I want to see.

Not, I want to have greatness and glory. Not, I want position and power. Not, I want comfort and security and a nice, comfortable, easy kind of life.

[23 : 11] I want to see. Jesus is the one who has come to give us sight. Yes, Bartimaeus is healed physically, but when Mark, the author here of this gospel, when he talks about the blind seeing, he is always talking about seeing who Jesus is, perceiving, understanding.

Remember, Jesus' rebuke to these same disciples back in chapter 8, after all his teaching and after all the miracles they had seen and witnessed, what does he say to them?

Do you still not see or understand? do you have eyes but fail to see? Jesus has come to give sight, to open up our blind eyes so that we might know and understand who Jesus is.

that he's the one with absolute power and supreme authority, but became a suffering slave to set us free so that we can have life.

Jesus came to give us sight and now Jesus calls us to follow him. Look at verse 52.

[24 : 43] Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you. Healed is the same word there as saved.

Physically he can see. Spiritually he can see. He understands who Jesus is.

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road because to see Jesus is to follow Jesus.

To go, to know him is to go with him. We can't claim to have faith in Jesus but not follow Jesus.

Look back at verse 49. Jesus stopped and he had said to Bartimaeus, call him. Verse 50, throwing his cloak aside he jumped to his feet and he came to Jesus.

[25 : 46] He was called and he came. But look how he came. He threw his cloak aside, perhaps the only possession this blind beggar had but symbolically he throws it to one side to follow Jesus.

He has come to see that Jesus had given all of himself for him and now he is willing to give all of himself to Jesus.

Look, if Jesus gave his life so that we may gain life in all its fullness now and for all eternity, that means we can let go of all that we have to follow him.

if Jesus gave everything to us, that means we can let go of everything we have to follow him.

We thank God that churches have been planted and the only way that we'll see more churches planted is to follow Jesus along the road.

[27 : 04] but maybe like me, you're just struggling to follow. Maybe this is all too much.

Maybe you're worried about how much you will suffer. Maybe you're scared of where you'll go or where you'll end up. Maybe inside you're fighting the battle about the cost that is involved.

To be honest, I don't really like this passage very much. It's a bit hard. Unlike the disciples at the very beginning, I'm afraid.

I'm afraid to follow. Well, if that's you, we need to become like Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, hopeless, helpless, nothing to offer, nothing to give, except the simple cry, have mercy on me, I want to see.

and when Jesus opens up our eyes, we see him in all his glory and in all his beauty.

[28 : 39] We begin to grasp as the Holy Spirit takes it and applies it to our lives. We see the suffering slave on the cross who died for you and for me.

And when it begins to capture our hearts and our minds, there is nothing we will not give. There is nowhere we will not go and there is no one we will not reach.

Like Bartimaeus, we simply need to ask for sight and follow Jesus along the road.

Let's pray. Lord, we struggle with these demands upon our life.

we are afraid and we're scared of what it will mean to follow Jesus.

[30 : 03] And so afresh we ask that you would give us all sight, open up our eyes to see the beauty and the glory of who Jesus is, to help us not understand, not just understand with our heads, but to know it in our hearts, all that Jesus was willing to do for us, to suffer for us, to become a slave for us, so that we might have life.

Please teach us what it is to follow you along the road. Not for our own glory, not for our honour, but for the fame of Jesus and for his name to be known in our own local communities, in our own neighbourhoods, in our colleges and schools, across this county, across this island, and across the world.

Lord, please help us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our time together to close through this song from heaven you came, helpless babe, which is a song that really helps us to fix our eyes and our attention on Jesus and in particular the suffering slave on the cross who died for us.

And the only right response is to follow him, to give our lives wherever he may call us. Let's stand together as we sing this and make it the prayer of our hearts.

near next to a month a full foot up to come to our feet who are in a jN Reverend chapter 10 bless you are going to see you just in Jesus