

# The Meaning Of Discipleship

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     This order of revealed truth is important. And it starts there with Peter's confession in verse 29. You can look at it there. And he asked them, but who do you say that I am?
- And Peter answered, you are the Christ. There's this initial moment of revelation that was so necessary because it's necessary that God convince us of Jesus's identity because you cannot rightly understand what Jesus did apart from believing in who he is.
- It had to start there. And that's the structure of Mark's gospel. He spends the first eight chapters really focusing in on who Jesus is. And the disciples have now come to see that the Lord has opened their eyes to that.
- In fact, in Matthew's account, Jesus immediately follows Peter's confession by saying, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father which is in heaven has revealed this to you.
- God was opening their eyes. This was a great moment, but it was a significant moment in the order. They're seeing who Jesus is. And then Jesus begins to plainly tell them about his coming suffering, death, and resurrection.
- [ 1 : 1 5 ]     But that can only be understood in light of the fact that they had just acknowledged who he is. And now he opens up about what he is there to do.
- You see that in verse 31. We read it. Let's read it again. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes. That is a representation of the Sanhedrin.
- And he would be killed. And after three days, rise again. Now, this truth was not easy for these men to understand or accept.
- And of course, that's represented in the fact that Peter, who had just made this great confession of Christ, then pulls Jesus to the side and scolds him because Jesus' mission didn't meet Peter's expectations.
- And then what follows that is the most severe rebuke that we see Jesus giving anyone in the Gospels who desired to follow him. What was it that he said?
- [ 2 : 1 9 ]     Get behind me, Satan. And it wasn't that Jesus was insinuating that Peter had been possessed by the devil or that he was otherwise under the influence of Satan in a very specific sense.
- What he was saying is that the men in rejection of Christ's mission had inadvertently set themselves in opposition to the will of God.
- Because they did not accept the word of God, they set themselves as adversaries to the will of God. And then what was it that Jesus said immediately following?
- You do not have your mind set on the things of God. You know what your problem is, Peter? You only want what you want. You're not thinking about what God's desire, what God's will is for this.
- And isn't that the place that we often find ourselves in? In the struggle, we're constantly fighting our tendency to only look at the eyes of man, only to set our minds on the things of man, rather than setting our minds on the things of God.

[ 3 : 30 ] And look where it got Peter in this passage in the other men. And then it's going to continue to be a theme as we get into these next verses. Because they misunderstood the mission of Jesus, they also misunderstood what it means to follow Jesus.

And now that he had plainly spoken about his purpose, it was necessary that Jesus explain the true meaning of discipleship. What does it really mean to follow Christ?

That's what he's getting at now. And you see the progression now, right? You see the order of revelation. He focuses on his identity first. Who do you say that I am?

And from there, he moves on to his purpose. Now that you know that, this is the gospel. Crucifixion and resurrection. And once Jesus has initiated that revelation, then he says, now here's what it means to follow me.

Here's what it means to follow me. Because it is not enough, hear me, it is not enough to acknowledge the truth of who Jesus is.

[ 4 : 43 ] To acknowledge the truth of Jesus's purpose in an intellectual way. Simply acknowledging those things is not enough. You must follow Christ.

And so he doesn't just stop with the explanations. He then calls them. Here's who I am. Here's what I'm doing. Here's what it means to actually follow me.

And that's where we get here. What Jesus called them to is radically different than what they expected. And it may be that as we get into these verses, it's radically different than your expectations too.

His teaching here is not hard to understand, but it is very hard to receive. After hearing his teaching, the question for the 12 disciples, and what will be the question for us, the conclusion of this passage is this.

Is Jesus worth what it cost to follow him? Is Jesus worth what it cost to follow him?

[ 5 : 49 ] Look with me at verse 34. Calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

That's an intense call to discipleship. If anyone will come after me, if anyone desires to follow after me, he must forget himself.

He must take up the cross. Luke adds daily. He must take up the cross daily. And he must follow me. There's been a significant amount of disagreement over the years as to what Jesus means in this call to follow him.

And some have suggested that Jesus is referring to sort of an elite category of Christian experience that requires a higher level of commitment.

In their minds, discipleship is this high level. It's a believer that just decides, okay, I'm going to really give this all that I've got at this point, that that's what discipleship is.

[ 7 : 07 ] And so they reason that what Jesus is getting at here is that if you really want to be a good disciple, a good follower, this is what will be true of your life.

And they say that a believer and a disciple are two different things. In their minds, Jesus is referring to a Christian that just wants to take their faith to the next level. But Jesus makes no such distinction anywhere, anywhere in the Gospels.

Jesus never says that there's two categories of Christians. He never says that to be a disciple is a different thing than being a believer.

And the summoning of the crowd here in verse 34 signals that the call to discipleship is not exclusive to the individuals that desire to go deeper in their faith.

Think about this. In the last two conversations, it's been private with his disciples. On the road to Caesarea Philippi, that's where the confession comes, the confession of Christ.

[ 8 : 08 ] It's once the, or excuse me, on the road to Caesarea Philippi. And when they get there, that's when this conversation takes place about his purpose. And now after those conversations has taken place, notice what Jesus does.

Apparently there's nearby crowds, no doubt desiring to be close to Jesus. And what does he do before he gets to the call to discipleship? He calls the crowds. He calls the crowds. Meaning that this message is not merely for those who were already intrigued by him, that were already following him.

This is the message for everyone. It's not an exclusive group of Christians. Jesus never called someone to believe in him that he didn't expect to repent and follow him as a faithful disciple.

Discipleship is not an exclusive category of Christianity. It is Christianity. And to be a believer in Christ is to be a disciple. And what follows in Jesus's teaching here in these verses is not a description of an elite Christian.

It is a description of a true Christian. And I want to draw your mind for just a moment back to Mark chapter four.

[ 9 : 22 ] In Mark chapter four, remember Jesus is telling these parables and he opens with this parable about the soils. Do you remember? Jesus says there's four types of soils and only one of those soils actually produces fruit.

The other three, or in the other three types of soil, the seed is ultimately destroyed or it is removed in some way or another. And later on, on that day, Jesus is explaining what this parable was about.

And he says that the soils represent the heart of man. Every man has a type of soil that is their heart. And it falls into one of these four categories.

And then he says, the seed is the word of God, that as the seed, the word of God is sown on man's heart. There's only one type of heart that will actually produce spiritual fruit that will actually indicate genuine salvation.

And that is the fertile soil, as you remember the parable. But I think as Jesus gets here to Mark chapter eight in this call to discipleship in verse 34, he's anticipating those people who are represented by the soil that is rocky and weedy.

[ 10 : 37 ] Remember? Let me read it to you. Mark chapter four, verse 16. These are the ones, Jesus said, that were sown on the rocky ground. The ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

But they have no root in themselves. They endure for a while. Then when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

Notice the things that ruin the seed in these soils. First, persecution, suffering, tribulation, difficulty, not just difficulty in general, difficulty as Jesus says, on account of the word.

And they fall away. What's the others? The cares of this world. The deceitfulness of riches, following after wealth, caught up in our own sin, caught up in our own lives, the desires for things other than the world, than the word.

[ 12 : 14 ] And what happens? The word is choked out. Now what's the common denominator in both of these soils? As Jesus told Peter in verse 33, they have their minds set on the things of man rather than the things of God.

And so these people at some point come to the word and perhaps for a little while, they receive it with joy and they appear as far as we can tell to be true Christians. But whenever the hardship comes, whenever somebody doesn't appreciate their Christianity, they immediately fall away, it's not worth it to them.

Or it gets choked out by the sin of their life or their other pursuits of their life. They never really follow Christ. They're intrigued by Christ. They're enamored by Christ, but they never actually follow him.

And so ultimately, they prove to be unfruitful. And I think Jesus has these categories in mind as he's calling the crowds to him in Mark chapter 8.

He's thinking, listen, you may acknowledge who I am. You may even see my purpose. But so did the people who received it with joy. So did the rocky soil people.

[ 13 : 27 ] So did the weedy soil people. But it didn't mean that they were true Christians. When Jesus calls the crowds, he anticipates that many would make a profession of faith only to later abandon that faith when following Christ just cost too much.

He warned that those who thought they could gain salvation by merely acknowledging his identity and purpose but never truly following him, it was impossible.

So he proclaimed that the way of discipleship includes total self-abandonment. And it inevitably leads to some form of suffering on account of Christ.

Jesus here is teaching the crowd to count the cost, which is actually exactly what he said when saying this same thing in another moment. We find that in Luke 14.

In fact, why don't you turn there? Luke chapter 14. And read this with me. Now great crowds accompanied him. And he turned and here's what he said.

[ 14 : 43 ] If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, in his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Now, of course, Jesus isn't advocating that we actually hate those that we love.

That's not what he means here. What he means is that those who would love father and mother more than him, as he says in Matthew 10, are not worthy of him. Those who would love son or daughter more than him are not worthy of him.

That our love for Christ will make our lesser loves seem actually more like hate. Okay? That's what he's getting at.

Abandonment of self following him. Now continue on with me. For which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

[ 15 : 51 ] Otherwise, when he's laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king going out to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000?

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Those are hard words. Hard words. What is Jesus calling us to? He's calling us to repentance.

To abandon everything else in this life to follow him. And an unwillingness to turn means that we are not actually his disciples.

So in Mark 8, he's calling them to count the cost. We've said this the last couple of weeks and I think it's just helpful to be reminded that true conversion does not only produce a confession of Jesus, but a follower of Jesus.

[ 17 : 17 ] And a true follower of Jesus will inevitably display the marks that Jesus teaches in this passage. Isn't that what James was getting on about in his letter in James chapter 2?

Show me your faith without your works and I'll show you my faith by my works. In other words, it's not the works that save us, but true faith results in radical change.

So true conversion is not merely saying intellectually giving assent to the things of Christ. It is actually abandoning all to follow after that Christ.

And the true disciple ultimately will demonstrate these marks here. Jesus gives three imperatives in this verse. They all picture together repentance, don't they?

You understand repentance. Repentance, it literally means to turn away. It's a 180. It's to be going in one direction and then make a complete turn and go in the other direction.

[ 18 : 22 ] And Jesus gives these three imperatives that together picture this perfectly. He says, first, you're heading down the way of self. And if you're heading down the way of self, the first step is that you have to turn away from self.

And in the process of turning away from self, you're picking up your cross and then what are you doing? You're following him. You're going in the other direction. Okay? That's what Jesus is getting at with these three imperatives.

Let's talk about them quickly. Number one, he says, deny yourself or deny himself. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself. Many people don't make it past this first item because it goes against everything in our nature, doesn't it?

Our culture idolizes self. Self-love, self-care, everything's me. Everything's there to serve me. It's my truth.

We are our own gods and we worship daily at the altar of self-pleasure. That's the culture in which we live. That's the nature with which we are born.

[ 19 : 28 ] But Jesus says that to follow me, you're going to have to forget yourself. Forget yourself. This word for deny here literally means disregard.

He's not talking about the mere denial of pleasures. He's not advocating an ascetic life. That's not what Jesus is saying. He's saying that when you come to me, you forget everything else.

Forget yourself. Forget yourself. Stop following self. Stop following what you want and set your thoughts on the things of God.

That's what a true disciple does. Denies himself. It's the total disregard and an abandonment of selfish desire and ambition.

And then he says, take up his cross. If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross. What does this mean? We've all probably heard people make silly statements about this, right?

[ 20 : 30 ] Perhaps you've made them even as a joke. I got a headache today. It's just my cross to bear. No, that's not your cross to bear.

That's not what Jesus means here. What was the cross? It's interesting in this passage because Jesus has not yet, as far as we can tell, actually plainly mentioned crucifixion as the means of his execution.

He's just told them that he's going to be killed and that he's going to rise three days later, but there's no indication that he's actually said crucified yet. So Jesus isn't necessarily appealing to his specific form of death, even though that's an implication.

That's not necessarily the primary appeal that he's making. He's appealing to what their understanding of crucifixion would have been to begin with. Well, what was crucifixion? It was the Romans' favorite way, at least in this time, it seems to be their favorite way of criminal execution.

And every one of the people listening to this would have known exactly what Jesus meant. The cross represented shame. It wasn't a cultural icon in their days like it is today.

[ 21 : 44 ] Nobody wanted to be associated with a cross. That's the worst. It's like being associated with the electric chair in our culture. Nobody wants to be associated with that. That's shame.

It's reproach. Criminal. There was a Roman general in around the time of Jesus' birth.

His name was Verus. He was assigned to the Palestinian area at the time. There was a Jewish revolt after the death of Herod the Great. And in this Jewish revolt, Verus was called on to subdue it.

And of course, he easily did that. But to make a point in Galilee, when Jesus was a child, he crucified 2,000 Galileans.

And he did so by lining their crosses down the major road system that went through Galilee so that when you're taking your kids to the market in the morning, what you're walking by is cross after cross after cross after cross of brutally executed neighbors.

[ 22 : 51 ] That's what the cross meant to these people. So when Jesus says, if you're going to follow after me, you're going to have to identify with the cross. When the Romans crucified somebody, you know this from Jesus' crucifixion, but it was common.

They would have to literally carry a portion of their cross to the place of their execution. The criminal would do that. Remember, in Jesus' own execution, he had to carry his own cross, but he was so weak under the weight of it, he couldn't go any further.

And they had to call on somebody else from the crowd to actually finish carrying the cross to the place of execution. That was common. Jesus is literally saying, if you're going to come after me, you might as well go pick up a cross because that's the direction I'm headed.

It's going to be the direction you're heading to. People are going to look at you when they find out that you're following me. They're going to look at you with disdain. Do you understand?

And the world hates us. They hate us because they hated Christ. And isn't that what he told his disciples just before his crucifixion?

[ 23 : 53 ] They've hated me. They're going to hate you too. Hey, all of your friends at the synagogue, they're going to throw you out of the synagogue. And every one of you are going to suffer for me. And every one of them did suffer for him.

All of them, but one, were executed for the gospel. And the one who wasn't executed was John. And he might as well have been executed. He was boiled in oil according to Christian tradition and somehow survived it and was exiled to an island where he lived out the rest of his life and ultimately succumbed his own injuries or health or whatever it was that killed him.

That's what Jesus means. To follow me means no one's going to exalt you. They're actually going to do the opposite of that.

In Matthew 10, Jesus said, I did not come to bring peace but a sword. And then he talks about family relationships. And he says, my gospel will divide families.

In some cases, by God's grace, it actually unites families but in other cases, it's going to divide families. If your kids grow up to deny Christ and to deny you if you continue following Christ, will he be enough?

- [ 25 : 18 ] If those who are closest to you decide that if you're going to continue on this path of Christianity, I don't think that we can be friends any longer, will you still follow Christ?
- Is he enough? Jesus isn't talking about having a headache. Jesus isn't talking about the general hardships that we all go through.
- He's talking about persecution for sake of the gospel and he says it's inevitable for all of us. And then he says, follow me. What is it to really follow Christ?
- Well, deny ourselves, take up the cross, and then we follow. Isn't that the conclusion of repentance? He's not just calling us away from something.
- Get this. This is the good part of this. He's not just calling us away from self. It's not what he's doing. He's calling us to himself.
- [ 26 : 24 ] Do you see it? Deny yourself because you can't follow me and follow self at the same time. You see, you can't do it. He's saying, leave yourself behind and come to me because what I have to offer is so much greater than anything you think you can provide for yourself.
- Follow me. Come after me. Come to me. This is an invitation. It's an invitation. Do you have to count the cost?
- Of course. Did Jesus sugarcoat the process? By no means. But it was an invitation nonetheless. Follow me. And if you're going to follow me, it means you've got to stop following everything else.
- Follow me, he says. What does that mean? You go where he goes. You do as he does. You suffer even as he suffered, perhaps. Now, before I move on, it's essential to know, please hear me.
- See, I don't want to be confusing on this. These marks do not provide salvation. They are not what saves you.
- [ 27 : 36 ] Jesus isn't going to look at your life 10 years from now to make sure that you make the cut before he actually provides his grace. That's not what Jesus is saying here. These aren't prerequisites for salvation.
- They are proofs of salvation. Salvation comes by God's grace alone. Ephesians 2, for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves.
- It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. That's salvation. It's none of you and it's all of him. But those who have truly experienced the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit will display these marks.
- Not perfectly, but they will display them. They will turn from self. They will take up the cross and they will follow Christ.
- Bible knows no form of true Christianity that doesn't produce a fruitful faith. it's not there. It's not there.
- [ 28 : 39 ] True faith always produces a faithful disciple. And so what is Jesus saying here? Follow me.
- Follow me. He wants you to follow him. But then notice, as we move on, he expands upon this cost. He explains it further.
- At this point, the people in the crowd, they had to have been thinking, maybe as you are perhaps thinking even now, why would anyone follow that call? It sounds like a lot of sacrifice.
- And I don't see a lot of gain, you may say. But as we study this further, we find that what he offers is far greater than what we give up.
- Isn't that true? Do you find that to be true? Jesus didn't come to take your life. He came to give you life. Isn't that what he said?

[ 29 : 41 ] John chapter 10, I came that they may have life and that they may have it abundantly. That was the purpose of his coming. What is it that John chapter 3 says?

Just after the famous verse in 16, we read in verse 17 that God did not send his son to the world to condemn it, but that the world would be saved through him. He came to give life, which means that in this call to discipleship, he's not only calling you away from whatever your pursuit is now, he's calling you to do something far, far greater.

And he explains that here. Verse 35, whoever would save his life will lose it. Whoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? What can a man give in return for his soul? Literally there in that last question is what man can give the price for his soul?

No man. There's a Greek word here that I don't want to bore you with, but I find it helpful in understanding the sequence in these three verses here.

[ 30 : 53 ] The word is psuche. It's where we get psyche from. It can be translated as either life or soul. And it's translated as both things here in these verses.

It's mentioned four times. If you notice in verse 35, it's translated as life. But if you notice in verse 36 and then again in verse 37, it's translated as soul.

And Jesus is using it here to introduce this paradox. This paradox where somehow we lose our life if we actually attempt to save it.

But we gain our life if we lose it. But how can we both gain and lose?

Does it make sense? Here's what Jesus is doing. He's acknowledging the fact that our physical life is temporal. temporal. It will not last.

[ 31 : 50 ] But there is a part of us that will live on in eternity. That's our soul. So Jesus is presenting this paradox. What good is it? What good is it to live all of your life pursuing something that's going to be over before long?

Why would you forfeit eternity for something that will be gone perhaps today? whoever loses his life for my sake in the gospel will save it.

He doesn't have necessarily in mind this could be an implication but I don't think he has necessarily in mind this scenario where someone comes into our church service today and they hold a gun to your head and they say recant Christ or we will kill you.

I don't think that's what Jesus has in mind here because our ability to be weak or strong in that moment is not the basis of our salvation. He will not reward us for staying strong and he will not take away our salvation if we have a moment of weakness or timidity though God will give us grace.

That's not the point that Jesus is making. He's saying that if you're willing to let go of self if you're willing to abandon all of those things for my sake in the gospel guess what? You get this life that I offer.

[ 33 : 07 ] That's the point here. There's this gap that he's bridging between the temporal life and the eternal soul and what he's saying is that our temptation is to hold on to both things.

Do you feel this struggle? It's a daily struggle isn't it? It's a daily struggle to hold on on one hand to eternity and to Christ but to have such a hard time letting go on this hand the things that you want and the things that you pursue and the sins that really bring you pleasure and Jesus is saying you can't have this and this at the same time it doesn't work.



Whoever gives or saves his life will ultimately lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it will gain it. Jesus illustrated this in one of my favorite ways in Matthew I think it's chapter 13 he said in verse 44 the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure in the field a man found and covered up then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field and again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it.

I love that illustration so much. That's what Jesus is getting at in Mark chapter 8. Jesus is that treasure. Jesus is that pearl and what he's saying is that when someone finally sees me as the treasure when they see me as the pearl there's no cost that they're willing to give up in order to have me.

I'm that treasure. I'm that pearl. What a wonderful illustration of discipleship. This life isn't worth it. There is nothing here that's worth it.

[ 34 : 55 ] And Jesus follows it with two rhetorical questions. What is it benefiting you to gain the whole world if in the end you forfeit your soul? What good is it?

It's no good. That's a bad bargain Jesus is saying. And then he says even if you were to gain the whole world what could you possibly give to God in redemption of the soul that you lost?

The answer? Nothing. Nothing. Literally this phrase is what man can give the price for his soul? And the answer is no man can do that.

No man. Which reminds me of another parable of Jesus in Luke chapter 12. The land of a rich man Jesus said produced plentifully. And he thought to himself what shall I do?

For I have nowhere to store my crops. He said I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

[ 36 : 02 ] And I will say to my soul soul you have ample goods laid up for many years. Relax eat drink and be merry. And then Jesus said but God said to him fool this night your soul is required of you.

And the things you have prepared whose will they be? Jesus says so is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Jesus isn't saying that wealth is sinful in and of itself.

He's not saying that if we don't have room that we shouldn't make more room for the blessings that God has given us is not the point that he's making there. What's he saying? What's the point in living this life for yourself if at the end of it or what if tonight?

In relation to this parable up to this life you're just doing everything for yourself trying to pursue everything for yourself little regard for anything that God wants. Setting your mind on the things of man on the things of God.

All of these great dreams that you may have but what happens if God calls for your soul tonight? What good is all of that? It's no good.

[ 37 : 18 ] It's no good. Man spent his entire life pursuing selfish ambition and ignored the fact that this life is only temporary. Every one of us will stand before God's judgment.

No amount of wealth will be able to purchase forgiveness and eternal life. But Jesus paid the full price for sin and he offers forgiveness and life to all who will follow him.

That's the point. he's calling you to himself. Jim Elliot was one of the five missionaries who lost their lives in martyrdom to the Alka Indians in Ecuador.

This was in the 50s, right? And after the fact they began to go through Jim's stuff and they found in his journals where he had written a famous line that you've heard many times before.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. It's true. But lest we think that Jim Elliot is the word of God, let's mention what Paul said about it.

[ 38 : 31 ] Remember, Paul's pursuit in life was not wealth. Paul's pursuit in life was religious acumen. And if you're going to point to anyone who was the greatest religious mind of their day, you'd say, surely it's Paul.

And yet, what did he say in Philippians 3? Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

And then he says, for his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as trash in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

The righteousness of God that depends on faith. He's using accounting terms for those of you that are good with money. And he breaks out his spiritual ledger. And he says, on this side, at one point in my life, I thought all of these things were in the credit column.

I thought all of these things were in the credit column, but when I found Christ, I actually realized all of those things are actually in the debit column. I was actually bankrupt until I found Christ. And all of that stuff was so easy to leave behind.

[ 39 : 44 ] Why? Because of the surpassing value that I found in Christ Jesus, the treasure in the field, and the pearl of great price. That's what Jesus is saying in Mark 8.

Follow me. I have way more for you than what you think. What I have is worth whatever it takes. Follow me.

And then we get to verse 38, and we see what is the consequence of refusing this. Look with me. 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.

Notice Jesus uses this title again, Son of Man. He used that before. We talked about it last week, right? It's from Daniel 7. It's a messianic title. Here's what Daniel said about it.

Daniel 7, 14. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

[ 40 : 57 ] That's what the disciples were expecting in this coming, and they were surprised to hear Jesus say, no, that's not actually what I'm doing this time. What I'm doing this time is I'm going to suffer, and I'm going to die, and I'm going to raise for your sins.

But they were expecting Daniel 7. Now what is Jesus doing? This would have been so great for these men, wouldn't it? In the very next conversation, he gets to Mark 8, 38, and here's what Jesus says, that the Son of Man is coming.

Fellas, I know that's not the purpose of my coming now, but I can assure you what you're expecting will come. It's coming. This time my glory is veiled as I have taken on humanity.

It's veiled. This time I came alone, but I'm going to come later in the fullness of the glory of God, and I'm going to have the holy angels with me who are my messengers of judgment, and I will judge the earth.

What's the point of Jesus' statement here? That I may not look like much to you now, folks, but I am returning, and when I return, it will be for judgment. Are you ready for that judgment?

[ 41 : 58 ] Are you ready for him to return? Because he says, when I return, whoever it is that's been ashamed of me, I'm going to be ashamed of them before the Father.

And he's not talking about embarrassment. I've heard preachers use this verse to coerce people in an altar call at the end of a service. They say, if you really want to follow Christ, you raise your hand, you stand up, you come down and fill out the card or whatever it is that you need to do.

And they say, now remember, Jesus said, whoever is ashamed of him, that he will be ashamed of them before his Father. That's not what Jesus means here. You're not talking about embarrassment. Listen to me, if you're a believer today, if you're a believer today, there is no shame in Christ for you.

You are loved by him. Your position with him is settled. It's settled. Whether you raise your hand or stand up or fill out the card or not, it's settled.

That's not what Jesus is saying. He's talking about rejection. Those who have refused, to abandon self, to follow me, I will reject them in the judgment.

[ 43 : 05 ] And it's not something he glories in. It's something that he warns of here. He says, follow me because if you don't follow me, I'm going to reject you in the judgment. And he's coming back.

Are you ready? Martin Ross lived just outside of Ithaca, New York at the turn of the 20th century. He was an alcoholic man that had no interest in religion of any sort.

But he had a faithful wife. Her name was Bertha. And she was a believer that prayed for him. Their church prayed for him that he would be saved. And through God's grace, eventually Martin became a Christian and he actually spent much of his life preaching that gospel that had so radically transformed his life.

they had a one daughter named Ray. And as an adult, her name was Ray Miller. She reflected on her father's testimony of following Christ.

And she remembered that he had on several occasions made this proclamation of how valuable Jesus was to him. That he was more valuable to him than any of the other things that this life could ever offer.

[ 44 : 21 ] And in 1922, Ray Miller sat down as a 28-year-old adult reflecting on the testimony of Christ as the example of her father's life. And she wrote a poem that 10 years later was picked up by George Beverly Shea, set to music, and sung probably all over the world at the various Billy Graham crusades.

He would go and travel with Billy Graham. And so as Ray Miller would reflect on her father's testimony, here's what she sat down to write. 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 or lands. I'd rather be led by his nail-pierced hand.

You know this song, don't you? than to be the king of a vast domain and be held in sin's dread sway. I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.

She went on to write, thinking of her father, I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause. I'd rather be faithful to his dear cause. I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame.

[ 45 : 45 ] I'd rather be true to his holy name. Because he's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom. And he's sweeter than honey from out of the comb.

He's all that my hungering spirit needs. I'd rather have Jesus and let him lead. God's saved. I think Martin Ross and Ray Miller and Jim Elliot and the Apostle Paul and George Beverly Shea understood what Jesus meant when he said, whosoever would save his life will lose it.

And whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel will save it. I think Martin Ross would agree with Paul in Romans 8 when he wrote, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

At the heart of verses 31 to 38 is love. Jesus says in verse 31, I love you so much that I'm coming to suffer and to die and to rise for your justification and forgiveness in life.

And then in verse 34, he says that the disciple will love me enough to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

[ 47 : 18 ] And so the question for each of us is, do you find him worth? following.