

We Need to Talk...

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] We've had a short break from Mark. We're back into Mark now. I don't know if you guys have ever had a DTR.

What's a DTR? Define the relationship conversation with someone. You know, like a couple of people are hanging out and like a bit too much.

And someone at some point says, hey, what's happening here? Like, is this a thing? Are we just friends? Is this going anywhere?

So it's kind of awkward, right? For them. Well, this little section we're looking at today, this is like an extreme version of a DTR.

So Jesus and the crowd and the disciples, they've been together for a little while. They've been hanging out for a little while, right? Journeying. And just before this, Peter has said, to Jesus, you are the Christ.

[1 : 00] You're the Messiah. You're the one sent by God to rescue us. Amazing words. True words. And now Jesus immediately goes to define what that actually means.

And it's sort of like, in his head, you can imagine he's thinking, you've called me the Messiah. You think it means this. It's something quite different.

And I'm going to define what it means for you very clearly. And it gets pretty awkward pretty quick. So in verse 31, this is going to be really helpful to have your Bibles, actually. So if you don't have a Bible, see if you can grab one in front of you, because we'll be tracking with the text pretty closely. In verse 31, what does Jesus say here? He says, I will suffer many things. I will be rejected by all the religious authorities.

I will be killed. I will rise again. Now, we don't know what Peter had in mind when he said to Jesus, you are the Christ. You are the Messiah, right? But it probably wasn't this.

[2 : 01] There were Messiah stereotypes, messianic stereotypes in the day. And they were sort of like military leaders who would destroy the Romans, or the Messiah would be like somebody who really doubles down on the law, gets hardcore on the law, maybe kicks out the Gentiles, or something like that, right?

So there were these ideas floating around of what the Messiah would be like. And so Christ's definition of the Messiah, suffer many things, rejection killed, rise again.

To Peter, obviously, this would sound ludicrous to Peter, which is why in verse 32, it says that Peter physically took Jesus aside and got right up in his face and said, man, you've got to cut this out. You know, this is crazy talk, Jesus. You're ruining. You're ruining this. And the word it uses here is that Peter rebuked Jesus. That word rebuke is a word mostly used to describe when somebody casts out demons.

They rebuke a demon. So that gives us a bit of an idea of the veracity at which Peter got stuck into Jesus. So Peter rebukes Jesus, and Jesus in return rebukes him.

[3 : 22] Get behind me, Satan, he says. You know that Satan is terrified of the idea of Christ's death. He knows what it means.

And Satan speaks through his leading disciple, Christ's leading disciple, and Jesus recognizes that, I think. Okay, back to what Jesus says. So he very plainly states the plan.

I will be rejected. I will suffer. I will die. Anyway, it's shocking, and it's, of course, prophetic because Jesus did suffer many things. He was mocked and betrayed, and people asked him demeaning and stupid questions, and his disciples had these petty arguments about who's going to be the greatest. You know, and his family thought he was nuts, and he was tortured, and he was beaten. And the people that should have recognized him didn't, i.e. all the religious leaders. And isn't it interesting that the people that orchestrated his death were not the worst that society had.

They were the best. The best, the people that society lifted up and said, wow, these are the really good guys, you know. It was them that actually orchestrated the death of Christ. Now, if I was to ask you, you know, when we think about what Jesus wrote down here, what he's saying is planned forward.

[4 : 41] If I said, okay, why did Jesus have to die? You would likely come up with a pretty good answer, I think. You would say something like he died for our sins. Through his death, he bore the burden of God's judgment.

Something like that, which is true. And that's a good chunk of the gospel. So it raises a question. Why the suffering, though? Why all the suffering?

Jesus didn't say, oh, I'm going to have a hard time, and then I'm going to die. It's like, I will suffer many things. Why all the suffering? What would you say if I asked you that? Because it's obviously part of the plan.

Why didn't Jesus come to earth, set up shop, preach, die peacefully? You know, like a cool movie death. You know, like, you know, it's calm, it's kind of whimsical and mystical, and why not that kind of death?

Why was it so messy, and why was it so angry and violent? Well, there are lots of reasons. One of them, one of the reasons is this.

[5 : 49] We shouldn't expect anything different. Do you remember when we preached through 1 and 2 Samuel last year? The older guys, you guys remember that, right?

1 and 2 Samuel. I know that towards the end of Samuel, you started to not like me and the book of Samuel, because we were in this quite heavy Old Testament book for a very long time.

I absolutely loved preaching Samuel. I loved it so much. And I'm sorry that some of you had a hard time towards the end there. And do you remember the chapters on David, when David was on the run?

I don't know if you remember that specifically, but there was quite a lot. It seemed like it was just chapters of just David having a really difficult time, hiding in caves, and Saul trying these kind of pincer manoeuvres to try and get him, and he just manages to escape.

There were chapters and chapters of just drama with David. Why was somebody dedicated to that? Well, the answer is that David was the true king, and an apostate king was on the throne.

[7 : 01] David was a threat to this guy's authority. So of course there's going to be trouble, right? That's why David got into so much trouble. That's why he had a stressful kind of life.

Jesus is the true king. He is a threat to the leadership. He is a threat to the established structures, to the established power structures.

So of course he's going to suffer. Of course there's going to be trouble. That's one reason. One reason why he's suffering, why Jesus must suffer. Another reason is he's identifying with humanity. It says in Hebrews that we have a high priest who is able to sympathize with our life. He knows what it's like to suffer. Now there are lots more reasons, but one that the passage brings up is in verse 34.

Let me read it here. So Christ's suffering and death are a model.

[8 : 15] They're a model for how we should live as his followers. And it's a bombshell, right? Like it's a total bombshell. I want you to put yourself in the mind of a first century listener.

What would you hear? Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow me. Deny yourself. It's probably not too bad. Follow me. Yeah, that's pretty good.

Take up your cross. Wow, that's a tough one, right? Because to the first century leader, first century listener, when they think cross, they don't think, Jesus hasn't died on the cross yet, obviously.

It's not this symbol of hope at this point, right? It's not a church spire. It's not jewelry. It's not a cool tattoo. It's this, it's a symbol of torture and death.

It's horrible, unimaginable pain. There was, and so fresh in the, like a few decades before this, the Roman authorities captured this guy called Spartacus.

[9 : 22] You may have seen the movie. And he was a slave rebel. He had thousands of followers. When they captured this guy, they crucified him and all his followers. They crucified him on the streets.

So as you walked into the city, it was just, you know, I think it was like 6,000 bodies just right there. So when Jesus says, take up your cross, goodness, that's quite full on, isn't it?

And the taking up part is that Romans had this practice of you had to carry your cross to the point where you're going to be crucified. And Jesus did that, of course, didn't he? So, what exactly is Jesus saying here?

What's he saying here? What does he mean by that? I mean, so far he's said, here is what, here is what my Messiahship will look like.

Suffering. Death. And then he follows it up by saying, and here's what discipleship looks like. Looks like suffering and death and self-denial.

[10:34] What does that mean? Okay. Well, for a start, it can't mean, it can't mean that we just can be these detached fans of Jesus.

Being a follower of Jesus can't mean simply making minor adjustments in your life to be more holy looking, acting.

I mean, this is this dramatic picture of death and suffering that Jesus is painting for us here, right? It is, it can't be, it can't be just having really great Lenten practices, giving up chocolate for Lent.

Although, do that. It's like, you should do that, but, you know, whatever you choose. No. as I was writing this, as I was thinking about how to explain what this is, I was very reticent to come up with examples of what self-denial and putting yourself to death is.

Very reticent to do that because I think our hearts will want to make it a program. And so we go, well, Aaron said, well, if we stop doing this, this, and this, and this, you know, if we deny ourselves these things, we're kind of rocking for Jesus, we're doing okay and I think that is a sinful thing.

[11:51] You know, I think that is a pride. It's putting salvation in our own hands, I think, if we do that. You know, because it can't be a program. Denying yourself, taking up your cross, it can't be, it's not denying certain nice things for yourself.

It's not denying certain things, it's denying yourself to yourself. It's repudiating any right you have to be your own boss.

It's abandoning your life to God and accepting the fact that that will be painful, that will be difficult because there will be acute, there will be acute presenting internal and external resistance to that decision.

and Christ expands on what he's just said here and he says in verse 35, for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.

It's beautiful, it's great, it's a great line and it helps us to see that this denying of yourself to yourself is not doom and gloom and depressing.

[13:07] It's not denying something to yourself, it's denying self, itself, if that makes sense. But the plan of it, the goal of it, is not just the, the goal of it is salvation.

Jesus wants to save you. Let me read it again. For whoever would save his life will lose it, whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. That's the goal. The goal is salvation.

Jesus wants to save you and he is telling you how to gain life now and life in the world to come and we gain it by giving up our self-determination, by putting our hands, by putting our lives in the hands of God and this is different to like the self-denial of eastern religions or Christianity in its worst kind of legalistic forms because it's not forget yourself, pretend you don't exist, you are nothing, it's not that.

It's Jesus wants to give you life and he's asking you to give up the thing which is destroying you and what is it that's destroying you? It's self-determination.

It's saying I'm in charge. That is destroying you and here's how it works. We face God one day and we say to God well it's pretty obvious.

[14:27] I spent my life ignoring you being my own boss and God will let you experience that for eternity and that is what hell is and Jesus wants to save you from that and so all he's saying here this whole self-denial this whole death thing that whole picture there is saying give up the thing that will ruin you.

Give up the thing which will which will result in eternity without God. That's what death to self is.

Verse 36 for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Christ then asked a very hypothetical question a very reasonable question that might be on people's minds. What if I live for myself and I have a really great life? I'm a slim green-eyed redhead living in a beautiful I'm just making this up as I go.

Earning the big bucks in the Anglican church. No. What if I'm a superstar and I've kind of anything I want is mine and I live this wonderful life.

What if I live this incredible life of it's all about me and Jesus says what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

[15 : 49] It's not worth it. You gain everything and you lose everything and more for eternity. Verse 38 is devastating in its plainness here.

He's hitting this home, right? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes to the glory of his Father and the holy angels.

If you spend your life denying Christ you will suffer ultimate loss through the judgment of God. And we see here that the motivation for denying Christ and his words is that we are it's the shame word whoever is ashamed of me and my words, right?

You are unwilling to experience the kind of shame that Christ experienced for us that he calls us into by living a public Christian life. And we know the shame in Vancouver because Christianity is a synonym for homophobia or intolerance anti-intellectualism sexual repression you know.

And this passage calls us to be public Christians at the risk of being terribly misunderstood and unfairly labelled. Let me wrap it up here.

[17 : 11] And so Peter explains what it means to be the Messiah and he explains what it means to be a disciple and it's brutal. and he rebukes Jesus for it.

About 30 years after this event the Apostle Peter wrote a remarkable little letter called 1 Peter and it was seen that he learnt something in those years.

Let me read a couple of verses from this letter. This is 1 Peter 2.20. 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.

He committed no sin neither was deceit found in his mouth when he was reviled he did not revile in return when he suffered he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness by his wounds you have been healed.

[18 : 44] Folks can I get an amen? Amen. Would our prayer come up and pray please?