

Mark of Discipleship

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- [0 : 0 0] Friends, my name is Ash. I'm on staff here as the Next Gen pastor here, and it's so good to bring God's Word to you today, particularly in the book of Mark for the school holidays.
- There's this show on YouTube that I love watching. I could watch it for hours on end. It's called Worth It. I would sit there binging, and essentially, if you've never watched it, there's this team that goes to three different restaurants at three different price points, and some of the videos are about steak, some about taco or Korean barbecue, delish, and the whole goal is for the team to figure out which meal is worth paying for.
- So you might have one restaurant that has a really greasy, easy cheeseburger at \$1, and it's like, oh, cooked in beef fat, ooh, and then they get to the next meal, and they add something a little unique.
- You know, they might add some beetroot jam, maybe a burger patch, burger glaze, maybe some goat's cheese, and the patty is lamb and filled with blue cheese, and that costs like \$25.
- But then they go to the mega expensive joint, and you're always astounded at how much it costs because it's a whopping \$149, and it's pure wagyu beef, double patty, the burger is dripping and juicy, and then the piste resistance, lobster and caviar and gold leaf because that's what you're tasting.
- [1 : 2 3] And so at the end of the day, the team go, wow, they all tasted good, but which one was actually worth it? And like the burger that has seafood and wagyu on top of each other, I want to ask, is it really worth it?
- I mean, really, is it really worth it? And for every Christian, even when people have followed Jesus their whole life, people who are starting that journey to follow Jesus, the question in their head arises, is Jesus worth it?
- And it's probably a question you're asking or your friends have asked you, is Jesus really worth it?
- Is he really worth giving your life for? Because in this passage, we discover that Jesus is saying there is a cost to discipleship. There is a cost to following him.
- And the question that this passage answers today, is Jesus worth it? But before we jump in, let's just chat to God.
- [2 : 3 1] And Father God, we pray that you might help us prepare for our lives being changed here right now today. I pray that you might give me the words to speak and that you might be glorified as the Bible is open in front of us.
- In Christ's name, amen. Alrighty, keep your Bibles open at Mark 10. That's the passage that we're diving into. You'll notice with my slides, I won't put the passage up. I'm going to encourage you to have your Bibles open because the Bible is our authority.
- I'm not your authority. No one on staff is the authority of Scripture. The authority comes from God's Word. He speaks to us through it. So, have your Bibles open. But before we get into that, it's always helpful for us to think about the context.

What's happening around this passage? When was it written? Why was it written? And I keep telling my leaders and the youth that I'm training when they're reading a passage that whenever they read a passage without context, it's like reading Harry Potter and seeing just one sentence that Harry is weeping and then just deducing that he's a crybaby.

I don't want to be in the Bible in that way. I don't want you to be in that Bible in that way. So, a little tip to help you when you read the Bible, when you read it for yourself in your quiet times is always think about the context. What's going on?

[3 : 46] For this passage, there's one helpful context marker. And that is that Mark is written to people at a time where Christians were being persecuted.

Which at the time, the Roman Emperor Nero hated Christians. And so Christians at the time of the writing of Mark were being killed for their faith.

I think we need to let that sit for a bit. Let's not just move on from that quickly. The very reality for Christians was that you would die an earthly death for just saying, Jesus is Lord.

And the reality is Christians at the time were encouraged not to shrink back. They were encouraged to share the gospel despite the face of death.

And today, friends, by God's grace, there have been centuries of Christians. And today there are 2.38 million people who trust in Jesus. Or at least have heard about Jesus.

[4 : 50] Why die for something not real? Why die for something not worth it? So that's the audience of Mark. Let's dive into verse 17. As Jesus was started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him.

Good teacher, he asked. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Now, there have been other times where Jesus is approached by people, but their questions are to catch Jesus out or test him.

And spoilers, they never do. But here, the heart and the ulterior motive to asking their question is not fake.

This guy is pure, genuine. He's genuine about approaching Jesus as someone who might know teachings, who is wise enough to tell him how to be able to live forever.

And in other words, heaven. God's forever placed with him. And so what does Jesus say? Verse 18. Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

[6 : 07] And Jesus doesn't answer the question directly. He goes back with another question. And I wonder if you've ever been in those situations. And you ask your parent or a wise person a question. And they just ask, why?

Why are you asking that question, my young one? And the kid's like, just tell me. But I reckon here Jesus is onto something. Why does this teacher call him good?

Is it because Jesus is someone who does good things? Is he someone who teaches good things? Or is he perhaps someone with good character? Because Jesus says only God is good.

Because the person has missed the point or not seen it. He's not talking to a teacher, a rabbi, someone who knows the scripture. He's talking to Jesus Christ, the son of God.

Jesus Christ, son, God. Colossians 1 proclaims that he is the image of God. That when you see Jesus, you see God himself.

[7 : 09] And so what Jesus does is he continues listing the law and the Ten Commandments to what the rich man says. And he responds by saying, I've done all those things since he was a kid.

And his claim is not just following the law, but the length of time that he followed the law. He's kept the law. And not only that, kept it for ages. And I mean, congratulations to him.

I used to be a part of a beach mission. And often there was this kind of, ooh, who's made it to the two-hand club? The two-hand club meant that you had not been on one mission, two missions, but three, four, five, but at least reaching the second hand, six missions.

Then you'd look at some people as they count each year when they ask, oh, you know, how many missions have you gone to? And you see them count. And as they have approached their second hand, you look at them and you go, wow, they must be super holy.

They're a part of the two-hand club. They're so cool. See, the way the rich man envisions entering God's kingdom is by the means of following the law. And for him, his claim is genuine.

[8 : 11] Remember, he falls to Jesus' knees. But it's misguided. He thinks that Jesus is just a teacher. And if he's done good things or a spiritual ritual like praying for 24 hours on end for a long enough time, he can get into heaven.

We've already looked at this year twice in Ephesians 2 as a church, which verse 8 says, for by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. You could have been coming to St. Paul's for years. You might call St. Paul's home. I mean, your great-great-grandparents and your grandparents could have been here for decades.

They're part of the furniture. Maybe you've thought if you stop swearing, that will save you. Friends, you are saved by trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

Don't forget that. So Jesus responds to this guy. Come look with me in verse 21. Eyes glued into your Bibles. Jesus looked at him and loved him.

[9 : 18] One thing you lack, he said. Go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come follow me. The call for the Christian is give up everything and then come follow him.

But did you see it? Jesus here actually answers the question about, is Jesus worth it? You will have treasure in heaven.

Some of you have heard about heaven. Some of us have cultural ideas of heaven. Some of us have been sitting in pews and we've just forgotten about what heaven looks like.

And so I'm going to read what Scripture says about heaven. And my prayer is that God's spirit moves in you to see the glory of God's kingdom and see that Jesus is worth following. Number one, heaven is a place, according to Revelation 21, where God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

[10 : 31] Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. Number two, Jesus says in Matthew 6, that treasures in heaven neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

And my final one, for we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5.1. Friends, I'm so excited for heaven. I cannot wait. Heaven will be the place that we will all be made perfect. There will be no more suffering, no more tears, no more being lonely, no more being rejected.

We will get to be with our Lord and Saviour forever. And I think the fact that we, including me, are those who live in the comforts of the North Shore, that it begs the question of whether you are ready to give up your possessions for Jesus, because he is talking about money here.

But don't miss the point. Don't miss the points, friends. The man's problem was that he had great wealth, but that's not Jesus' point. Have a look at verse 28.

[11 : 52] Peter, one of the disciples, says, We have left everything to follow you. I tell you the truth. Jesus replied, No one who has left home, or brothers or sisters or mother or father or fields for me in the gospel.

We'll do a little pause there. It is money that Jesus is talking about. But it's not just money that he is calling people to give up. But earthly things.

Family. Children. Fields. Hobbies. Phone. Work. I don't want to lie to you. There is a cost to following Jesus.

My older brother, Jeremy, was born with a genetic disorder that impacts his nerve systems, which means at the moment he's legally blind and hard of hearing and struggles to communicate, speaking.

And the first that they noticed that one of his eyes wasn't actually reacting to light was when he was three months old. And so the church came together to pray, which, can I just say, that's just a beautiful thing to hear.

[12 : 55] And everyone was concerned about his ability to study, being able to ride a bike, play sport, to function like the most of us with full sight.

And my dad said something astonishing. He said, Don't pray that he regains his sight. I mean, pray what you will. But his primary concern and his prayer request was that Jeremy does not know a day where he does not see Jesus.

Is Jesus worth it to you? Is Jesus worth giving up everything? Jesus says that there will be no one who gives up all things for him who, verse 30, will receive, will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields, and with them, persecution, and in the age to come, eternal life.

Jesus is saying there is something better coming. Jesus is saying that by trusting in Jesus, you do not lose out. For the one who has been toiling to keep their family together and appease their kids, Jesus is saying, don't hold back.

You will receive a family in Jesus. For the one who is anxious about financial security, Jesus says, find your security in me and in the place I have for you in heaven.

[14 : 26] To those who are obsessed about what others think of you rather than what Jesus thinks of you, that's me often. Jesus says, you are loved and affirmed and made in my image.

Friend, if you follow Jesus and you leave your home, your brothers, your sisters, your mother, your father, your children, your worldly dreams, you don't lose out. You do not lose out.

And I want to be clear here. Jesus is not saying those things are bad. I wonder if your children are looking at your parents and going, do you think I'm bad? But these things are not ultimate.

You remember those hubba-bubba-gum? Those were wonderfully delicious. But why would you want a little bit of extra gum?

Look how small it is. It's so small. It's so small. So small. Why want that when you can get the long strap of hubba-bubba?

[15 : 37] This is going to have to go in the bin now. Friend, don't you want the hubba-bubba? Jesus is asking, what are you holding back?

What are you holding back that is stopping you? Answering Jesus' call of saying, come and follow me. You don't lose out. Friends, today there is so much half-hearted Christianity where we just want to tick the box and go, all I need to do is turn up to a church service, not even one specific church service, but join the band, maybe pray my nightly prayers.

Tick, tick, tick, tick the box. I don't know, maybe for you it could be the surf at the beach, could be the importance of worldly family, work, studies, but that means we're not all in.

And maybe you've realised that's you. The thing that you've clung to as being a part of Jesus' family is the fact that your parents love Jesus or the fact that you go to church weekly.

And people might make the excuses such as, I can be a Christian and be rich, and I can be a Christian and just do anything that will please my child. I can be a Christian and be a popular kid at school.

[16 : 49] But what's holding you back? Because sin, the stuff holding us back from Jesus, is a heart issue. It's not necessarily having those things.

It's a heart issue. Matthew 6.24 says, Friend, Jesus is worth it.

You don't lose out. Is it a particular activity that you love? Are you worried that if you go to church or youth, instead of an opportunity, you'll get kicked out of the sport team or debating team and not be able to compete high level?

Friends, Jesus is worth it. You don't lose out. Is there a relationship you want or you're doing something that no one knows about, you know it doesn't please God, but you still want to pursue it?

You can't serve two masters. Jesus is worth it. You aren't losing out. Life with Jesus means reconnected with your creator and you have life forever.

[18 : 09] You don't lose out. St. Paul's, are you all in? If that's you or you know you've been wrestling with this in the past like me, hear the comfort of the words in verse 21 again.

Have a look at it. Despite the man who Jesus knows will walk away from him because he chooses wealth, Jesus looks at him and loved him.

Friend, Jesus sees you. He knows your heart, the deepest of sin, your brokenness, the stuff in life that you're chasing and he says, I love you. I love you enough to send my one and only son to die on the cross for you.

Follow me. You don't lose out. What's at stake here is not the next five years, 10 years, 20 years, 70 years, 1,000 years. I get it. It's hard enough even to think about what will happen tomorrow, but what's at stake here is eternity.

Whether you know Jesus or not has an impact on whether you are a part of his family forever. And this is something I wanted to preach about at church in January when we first looked at in Ephesians 2, but I got vetoed because it would have been too long of a sermon.

[19 : 19] Remember in Ephesians 2, Paul uses you a lot. Like in verse 8, have a look. For by grace, you have been saved through faith. That you isn't just you as an individual.

It's not just you as Aidan has been saved. You, Flora, have been saved. You, John, have been saved. It's a group of people. It's plural. It's more like you all, y'all.

For by grace, y'all have been saved through faith. You are not saved to be individuals as individuals.

You have been saved as a community, as the household of faith. You are saved as a family. St Paul's family, what is more important than salvation? What can be more important than the fact that your friends may not be spending life together with Jesus?

Because one of the saddest things that I did this year, I don't know why, I looked at a photo of 11 of the people that I graduated youth with and see that only three of us are still actually followers of Jesus.

[20 : 25] The rest aren't. If we are a family, one of your priorities, one of my priorities is praying for people who are sitting next to us, that they stick with Jesus till the very end.

Ask them how they're going in reading the Bible, loving Jesus. And let's be honest. It could be an awkward conversation to start and to have if we've never had that. But what's more important?

And sometimes I'm not aware of my sins, so I need someone to call it out and help me, speaking truth in love, gently and kind, and pointing me that Jesus is more worth it.

I am not losing out. Whatever I'm chasing, I'm not losing out. And you need that too. And that's why we have God's community, the family. So this has been a big passage, a big call, but we aren't called to come half-hearted.

We need to really reflect on our life and pray that God's spirit will change us so that we can follow full-heartedly. On the screen coming up are some questions to ask yourself right now, maybe to even ask the close friends in the room.

[21 : 38] I've asked these questions when I wrote them for this talk as well. Write them down, maybe take a photo on your screen. Where is your hope right now?

Is the hope that you are holding onto unshakable? What's holding you back from giving everything to God? What is the idol that you are not willing to give up, the sin in your life?

Are you worried that you are losing out? And this might be something you will wrestle with today, maybe the next few days or weeks, but don't do it alone.

Do it with your church. Do it with your church family. Join a community group. Chat to one of the staff at the Lanyards. Don't do it alone. St. Paul's, are you all in?

Because Jesus is worth it. Gracious Father, when we look at what Christ accomplished on the cross, help us see that our sin has been removed and we have been forgiven.

[22 : 41] When we look to Jesus' resurrection, help us see that we too will be risen to life forever. When we know we are a child of God, help us know that we have a place in heaven.

When we see Jesus for who he is, not as a utility or as a good teacher, but God made flesh, help us to fall on our knees in worship and obedience, knowing that he is so much more than anything this world can offer.

Help us see that Jesus is so much better than what is holding us back from following Jesus wholeheartedly. Christ's precious name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.