

THE REAL JESUS
A Series on the Book of Mark
“The Cross Way”
Mark 8:22-38
New City Church of LA
February 1, 2008
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I. Vision of New City

Welcome to New City. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-socioeconomic come-as-you-are church. Share our vision.

II. Introduction

We are in a series on the Book of Mark called the REAL JESUS. We’ve been looking at the Book of Mark to see who the real Jesus is, not the Jesus we make up for even desire in our hearts, but who he really was and is. The first half of the book deals with that question. Mark told us that:

- Jesus preached about the coming of the kingdom of God;
- he taught with authority and was enormously popular;
- he said that he had the right and the power to forgive sins;
- he befriended and loved sinners and outcasts;
- he challenged the tradition of the religious leaders and the religious leaders;
- he cast out demons;
- he healed all kinds of people— a person suffering with fever, lepers, paralytic, bleeding disorder, blind, mute, deaf;
- he even had power over storms; he raised people from the dead; he fed thousands of people with a few pieces of bread and fish;
- he walked on water showing that he is the Great I Am, the Lord, and God.

Even after seeing all these things, the disciples didn’t get it. They were still blind to who the real Jesus was.

In Chapter 7:21, Jesus asked them, “Do you still not understand?”

Jesus is asking us: Do you not understand who I am? Do you still not understand?

Then, Mark goes on to tell an interesting story of a healing. Now, everytime you study the Bible, you not only have to understand what the passage is saying, you have to understand why a certain story is placed where it is placed. One answer is that that's when it happened. But, Jesus ministered for about 3 years. When you spend 3 years with someone, you come out with a lot of material, a lot of stories. Why did Mark decide to include a certain story but didn't include others. Ask yourself why Mark put the story here.

Read Mark 8:22-38

[If you're blind, how do you know what a tree looks like? You don't really know. You just think that you know from your imagination.]

This passage tells us: (1) how we follow Jesus half way; and (2) how we follow Jesus all the way.

III. First, how we follow Jesus half way.

The story of the blind man's healing is not only an interesting account of the healing of a blind man, but Mark put it there because it illustrates the blindness of the disciples and the process of seeing clearly. It's an analogy. It's also an analogy of our blindness and how we come to see clearly.

First, Jesus took this blind man and outside of the village and spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him and Jesus asked: "Do you see anything?" This man looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." He sort of sees but doesn't fully see. He doesn't see clearly.

In the same way, when Jesus asked the disciples "Who do people say I am?" People had varying vision of who Jesus was: "Some say John the Baptist; other way Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." They all thought he was a man of God, a great teacher, a great prophet. They understood a little about Jesus, but they couldn't see clearly.

I think some of us think of Jesus as a great teacher, a great ethical and moral teacher. If you reduce Jesus to a great moral teacher, you see him like trees moving around. He doesn't make much sense. Why did he die on the cross? What's this about

him claiming to be God? How do you make sense of that? And if you make Christianity into just a moral religion, a code of ethics to help you live better, you see people like trees moving around. If you think you're living by the code, you become judgmental towards those trees moving around and you're trying to chop them down all the time. And if you think you're not living by the code, you feel distant from God. You feel like God sees you like trees moving around. He doesn't really care for you.

Jesus goes on and asked his disciples: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Peter answered: "You are the Christ." Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. Peter got it right! He came to understand that Jesus is the Christ, which is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah, which literally means the anointed one. To be anointed means to be crowned king. It means that Jesus is the king, and not only a king, but a king to end all kings. Peter is saying, you are the King, the one who has been prophesied about and the one who is going to liberate us from Roman rule.

Then, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. The word translated as "warn" is often translated as rebuke. It's the same word describing Jesus rebuking the storm or rebuking the demons. Why did Jesus rebuke the disciples and tell them not to tell anyone?

Because as we will see, they don't have the right understanding of what it is that he is confessing to. Peter knows that Jesus is the Messiah, but Jesus is saying, you still don't see it clearly. You still only see like trees moving around.

You see, the Jewish understanding and expectation of the Messiah was extremely clear at the time. Jews have been living under foreign occupation for hundreds of years. Now, they were living under the Roman occupation. The western world was ruled by the Romans. They used governors and puppet kings to rule the land. Think about the bloody rule of Herod when he killed all the babies 2 and under in Bethlehem. There were many massacres that took place by the Romans. Ultimately, the movement became so violent that the Romans burned the entire city of Jerusalem in AD 70, after which the entire Jewish population in Jerusalem was either killed or escaped to never come back for thousands of years (actually until 1950s). That's when the Temple and the city was completely destroyed.

So, the Messiah was supposed to be a strong king who restores the Kingdom of God. They believed that when the Messiah comes, he will not only free the people of Israel but he will rule the world and become the king of all kings, establish a kingdom of God which shall last forever. We are talking about a strong military and spiritual leader! We are talking about becoming a king, taking the position of honor and glory. We are talking about saving Israel! When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, that's the kind of Messiah he confessed Jesus to be. No wonder Jesus rebuked him and told him not to tell anyone. He was touch by Jesus but he saw Jesus like trees moving around. He did not clearly understand who Jesus was.

So, when Jesus started to talk to him about how he must suffer and be rejected and be killed, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. There's that word again. No way. You are going to be the Messiah. You can't suffer, and rejected, and die.

Again, Jesus rebukes Peter, and this time, he is pretty explicit: "Get behind me Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

I think we are like that. Like the disciples, we confess that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the King. When we were baptized, we've confessed that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. Yes, we've got it right, but we still see Jesus like trees moving around. We have strong preconceived notions of what believing in Jesus means in our lives. Here are some misconception and I think Jesus will rebuke them.

1. Prosperity Gospel. Some of us think that Jesus is the way to success. If you donate money to the church, if you call the number on the screen and send in money, God is going to bless you with material riches. This lie is a lie because there is some truth to it. God does provide for our needs, the Bible tells us. However, it says nothing about helping you become rich and successful in the definition of this world's success. You may confess Jesus as the Lord, but you are don't have a clear understanding of who Jesus is. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men! God will not be reduced to a way to get what you really want in life. If money, success, and riches are what you want in life, and you think Jesus is going to blessing you with them if you do xyz, then your real God that you're serving is money, success and riches, not God. God

does want to bless you, but he wants to bless you with himself, with his presence, and his spirit guided life, with his mission in your life. That's the greatest blessing.

2. Jesus is going to take over the kingdom of this world. I don't know if you've seen it, but there was a cnn special a few months ago called God's Warriors. It was a report on how the three great religions of the world all have these segments that see themselves as warriors for God, literally fighting for their beliefs. Some people think that what we have to do as Bible believing Christians is to take over the kingdom of this world and legislate morality and Christianity. We have to make America a Christian nation again. We have to take America back for God. We have to legislate prayer. We have to legislate the moral values of the Bible. We have to take America back for God. We have to win the culture war with the moral relativists.

That's exactly how Peter thought. Jesus is the Messiah and he is going to come in power and take over the world. I am going to be one of his cabinet officials. That's why the disciples were arguing later about who's going to sit on the right hand of Jesus. They saw the mission of God and Jesus as winning the war against the Romans, the culture war and bring God back into the kingdom of this world.

But, Jesus is saying that you don't have in mind the things of God, but the things of men. Jesus didn't come to fuse the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. Jesus didn't come to take over the kingdom of this world by the power of the sword—by the power-OVER. Essentially, what many of us are doing in the name of God is starting to chop down trees. We see people are trees, so we think we can just chop them down with an axe.

We need the second touch of Jesus. We need for Jesus to put his hands on our eyes. This leads us to our second point of the sermon.

IV. How to Follow Jesus All the Way.

Right after the confession of Peter, the second touch came by explaining to him and the disciples plainly (Jesus didn't use a parable to teach them like before) that the Son of Man must suffer, be rejected, and be killed, and then be resurrected.

Jesus is saying he came not to take over the kingdom of this world, not to take the position of honor and glory in this world, but to serve and give his life on the cross for us. He said, he MUST die. He didn't say, he is going to die. It was his purpose to come to this world to die for our sins. So, he wasn't just predicting his untimely death. He is saying, the way in which the kingdom of God is going to come about is through his death on the cross.

After he rebukes Peter for rebuking him, Jesus turns to the crowd, he turns to all of us and says: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up the cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul (his self)?"

Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God is not about success as this world defines it—money, fame, security, house, recognition, respect, etc.

Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God is not about gaining power over the political realm and imposing our moral standards on everyone. It's not about becoming God's warriors!

Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God is about the Power-Under, the power of self denying love, the power of humility, the power the cross. It is about turning the other cheek; it is about treating others not as they have treated you but as God has treated you. Jesus is saying that the only way that this world is going to be changed, the only way in which our heart is going to change, is through the amazing grace and love of God who came to us when we were all screwed up.

It's about denying yourself and taking up the cross and following Jesus. It's not about following our success plans and seeking how Jesus could help us. No, it's about denying ourselves. This doesn't necessarily mean we deny things to ourselves (it could mean that), but it's a little deeper than that. It means we deny our self, our selfish interest, our well being, our success, our will, our pride, our rights, everything we are to God and assuming the position of a condemned criminal, on the cross, meaning we are willing to humble ourselves, we are willing to let others interest come before ours, we are willing to let our self die every day (Paul says he dies to himself every day so that Christ Jesus can live in him), let our greed die, let our anger die, let our everything die, and just

follow Jesus, to the way of the power-under, the way of love, and not the way of power-over, the way of this world.

A couple of observations:

One, you can't do this part-time. You can't do this half way. Any halfway Christianity is the kind that would be rebuked by Jesus. You've got to go all the way. You've got to submit all of your life to him and follow him wherever he leads. There is only one way to follow Jesus, and that's going ALL the way with Jesus, not just stopping in chapter 7 after all the miracles and big splashes.

Second, you follow because he first went. Your followership, your discipleship, is in response to what he has done for you. He came from glory in heaven, and lived a life you and I should have lived, and died the death that you and I should have died, so that we can be free from our self, our deep sickness in our heart that lead us to sin, the deep selfish nature in our heart that leads us to sin, he came to free us from that bondage of sin by touching heart the second time, showing how much he loves us. We follow in response to his love and in the steps of his love. We can only do this because of what he has done in our hearts.

Third, there is the resurrection. Jesus didn't just say, I am going to suffer, be rejected, and die. He said he will rise again in three days. I think Peter and the disciples just totally missed that point. Jesus also said there will be a time of glory in the kingdom of God. But, the way to glory in this kingdom is to die; to deny yourself, to forgive, to love.

Let me ask you something: Do you need the second touch of Jesus? Do you still not understand? Is your understanding like the one the Peter confessed? Is Jesus rebuking you?? Get thee away from me, Satan! Has the Satan deceived you?

I want to invite you to the second touch of Jesus. To a life of the power-under.