



His Cross; My Cross

By Jeff Bedwell on May 20, 2021

TODAY'S READING: Mark 8

Mark 8 is a turning point in Mark's record of the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus has been conducting a public ministry, speaking to large crowds, teaching about the kingdom of God and doing miracles to prove His authority. But then everything in the gospel story changes. Jesus' ministry becomes mostly private. He is not doing as many public miracles and primarily teaches the twelve disciples what it is like to live as a disciple in God's kingdom.

Peter speaking for the disciples, identifies Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah (vs. 29). Jesus then begins teaching them about His death and resurrection - a fact that Peter tries to rebuke Jesus for (never a good move to consider our plan better than Jesus' plan). Jesus spells out what it means to follow Him with these words in verse 34, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

To deny self is to deny my selfishness and self-centeredness. It is to deny any clinging to self-righteousness that I think might earn me any favor with God. It is a call to give up self-rule and submit to the rightful rule and reign of Jesus Christ as my King.

To take up my cross would have been an unforgettable, powerful image to those living in the days when they regularly saw people crucified in a shameful, gruesome and painful death. It is a call to let go of my hold on my life; let go of my plan for my life; let go of that role that I envisioned for myself; lay it down and follow God's plan for my life, even if it involves suffering, shame and death. Now, this is not a one-time call; this is the lifestyle call to every one of God's children.

Denying self, taking up our cross and following Jesus is a challenging call. Jesus never hid the cost of discipleship. Jesus also never hid the reward of following Him. Anything that may seem like a loss is actually an investment in life - abundant life now and eternal life in Christ Jesus. Following Christ is the only pathway to life. All because of the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

Mark Batterson wrote, *"Going all in and all out for the All in All is both a death sentence and a life sentence. Your sinful nature, along with its selfish desires, is nailed to the cross. Then, and only then, does your true personality, your true potential, and your true purpose come alive."*

After all, God cannot resurrect what has not died. And that's why so many people are half alive. They haven't died to self yet."

PRAYER: Father, I praise You for the cross and resurrection of Jesus - my only hope. By Your enabling grace help me deny myself, take up my cross and joyfully follow You today."

TOMORROW'S READING: Mark 9

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