



Meeting the Messiah

Dying to Live

Mark 8:34-9:1

Week 36
September 14, 2025

LIFE LESSON:

To give up our worldly lives to live the life that Jesus died to give us will allow us to experience the abundant life that He promised us now and throughout all eternity.

I. VV. 34-37

The words in today's passage are some of the heaviest words that Jesus had spoken up to this point. The call to follow Jesus is a call that demands total devotion and not an emotional commitment that leads to no lasting change in a person's life. To deny everything that you once held dear and put your allegiance in Christ is a lot to consider. But Jesus never tried to hide the reality and cost of following Him. As a matter of fact, He wants us to count the cost before surrendering to Him. In Luke 14 Jesus says, “²⁸ For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man started to build and wasn't able to finish...’ ³³ In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

Mark 8:34-38 is a response from Jesus to what had been said by Peter in verse 32 when Peter tried to rebuke Jesus when He was telling about impending death. No where does Jesus teach that following Him would be easy. We are not saved by any works of our own because salvation is a total work of God's grace. However, salvation will call for us as a result to deny ourselves and take up our own cross to follow Jesus. So, in verse 34 Jesus calls us to deny what has always brought us comfort or what has come natural to us, take up a cross which is a life of hardship and potential suffering, and to follow Him into a life that will be a result of these things. To carry our cross is to carry a

cross of doctrine, faith and practice. The doctrine is sought out and not believed by the world. Faith is believing in what is not always visible to us, so it brings ridicule from the world. The practice is living in such a way as to be a light that will many times point out the darkness to the world causing them to hate and possibly persecute those living out their Christian lives either by teaching or by practice. This is not the salvation gospel that you may have heard when you came to Christ and it may sound a bit radical, but it is the Christian life that is demanded by Jesus whether we are comfortable with it or not. These words of Jesus are hard, but they do not allow for any evasion or for any excuses. If we only look for the words of Jesus that can easily be manipulated to fit our sinful and worldly desires, we may be revealing that we are not truly of the faith and are only deceiving ourselves.

The call to follow Jesus forces us to come to terms with what abundant life and true living really is. Jesus said in John 10:10 "A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." But what is abundant life to you? Jesus said to have life with Him we must be willing to lose our lives. It is a fact that many people will strive so hard to have a good life but will in the end find that they are never fulfilled. It is apparent that Jesus is saying that true living is only found in following Him and giving up what we had always called life before Christ. It is true that following Jesus and spreading His gospel may literally cost you your life on earth. That is an absurd thought for many of us in the United States but in other parts of the world it is a fact of life that many do indeed face. But even if following Christ does not cause us to lose our life in death, it does call for us to give up our old lives and desires and pursue the life and desires of Jesus. No matter how heavy the cross that we are to bear may seem, Jesus will give us the strength to carry it. Paul writes in Philippians 4:13 "I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me." Paul was referring to the fact that he can handle being full or hungry. He can have all he needs or find himself in much need, but if he is following Jesus and living out the faith that saved him, he knows Jesus will give him the grace to carry on.

In verse 36, Jesus asks a reflective question. The longer we live the more we realize that things we enjoy and celebratory moments in our lives come and go. But

we continue to chase that moment in the spotlight to catch that feeling of true importance and meaning. Whether it be a promotion, winning a sporting event or having an experience in college. All the glory of these events fades and now they are memories that we may cherish but the rush we experienced for them is gone. Jesus is speaking of eternal life and joy that will never end. The glory of Heaven will never fade because we will be surrounded by the glory of the Lord. True meaning and fulfillment can only be found in eternal life through Christ and Jesus is asking what is worth giving that up for. J.C. Ryle comments, "We cannot surely expect that without trouble we can enter the kingdom of God. Let us go forward boldly and allow no difficulty to keep us back. The cross along the way is but for a few years. The glory at the end is forevermore."

Not only in heaven but even here on earth, we can have a life that has so much more meaning and fulfilling purpose than anything our natural desires can achieve. We give up genuine joy for pseudo-happiness when we allow the things of this world that our natural selves desire to dominate our day-to-day lives. It is a shame to live for mundane entertainment that evaporates quickly instead of living for true purpose in Christ that will never fade away. There is no benefit to it whatsoever. Once this life is over, everything that was done for anything other than the glory and Kingdom of God will pass away and any rewards that it may have brought us. Nothing is worth trading your life for. Not on this side of eternity or the other.

II. V. 38

The doctrines, teaching and living of Jesus has never been and never will be popular to the world's system. Jesus goes against everything our natural nature wants to pursue. If someone is to teach them and even go so far as to live them out it is sure that they will face ridicule if not straight up persecution. But to be ashamed of what people will say or do will cause one to be ashamed of Jesus and what He represents knowing that what Jesus stands for is not popular among their peers.

J.C. Ryle wrote, "There are thousands of men who would face a lion or storm a breach, if duty called them, and fear nothing – and yet would be ashamed of being thought "religious" and would not dare to avow

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

- 1. What things might you have to give up to follow Jesus that you may be hesitant to release?**
- 2. Are any things that you want to hold onto other than Christ worth giving up the life He died to give you?**
- 3. How have you shown that you are not ashamed of Jesus, His message, and His cross lately?**

that they desired to please Christ rather than man. Amazing indeed is the power of ridicule! Incredible is the bondage in which men live to the opinion of the world!" We all know the uncomfortable feeling that comes with testifying of Jesus to some degree or another but are we more in love with the opinions of the world that we know are wrong than we are in love with Christ?

It would make more sense to be ashamed of our sin, the worldliness we possess or even our unbelief, but it is Jesus that we seem to be more ashamed of in the presence of the world. The fact that the cross was bore by Jesus as the greatest demonstration of love ever presented to mankind would be the kind of thing people would want to talk about and to reveal to anyone who will listen. Those who belong to Jesus may feel some discomfort, but when someone experiences God's love for them they will want to brag on Him to the world and not hide their lamp under a bushel.

To be ashamed of Christ now is to deny knowing Him and this is a sure sign that one does not know Him. This means that on the day of judgement, the one who denied knowing Jesus will hear Jesus deny knowing them. Again, Ryle said, "Better a thousand times confess Christ now and be despised by man than be disowned by Christ before His Father in the day of judgment."

COMMENTARY USED:

Ryle, J. C. Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of Mark: A Commentary [Updated] (p. 128). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.