

Series: I have decided

Sermon Text: Mark 8.31-38 | **Title:** The Gospel and The Cost

Date: 9.3.2020

MPT: Salvation costs us our lives and gives us life

MPS: The only hope you have is to surrender your whole life to Jesus.

INTRO –NEXT WEEKEND is Mercy’s 5th Birthday. We are going to have a lot of fun celebrating the faithfulness of God. Got some really cool things planned. But if the whole grounds here turns into some kind of birthday tailgate palooza...I’m cool with that too. Really I am a firm believer that part of walking forward in faith is looking back in praise. God made us that way. Our gospel memories are holy fuel for the gospel ministry God has for us next. So, we gonna celebrate. And then, we are going to move forward into the next season. So bring a friend and talk it up because we want to fill this whole yard with the celebration of God’s faithfulness.

A part of next weekend’s celebration will be baptisms. This is the way Jesus taught us to express our commitment to him. If you have decided to follow Jesus and you have not been baptized, Jesus calls us to follow him in this first step. I want you to take that step to be baptized next weekend. We are going to talk about that today in the sermon. This is your public profession of the faith you’ve placed in Jesus and we are excited to celebrate that with you.

Ok Open up your bible to Mark 8. We are calling this series “I have decided” because Jesus claimed that anyone who

wanted his salvation would have to make a decision. There are no accidental followers of Jesus. Nobody becomes a Christian through second hand faith. What Mark 8 is all about is Jesus showing us who he is and then calling us to a decision on where we stand with him. And today we are going to complete this series in a very climactic line in the sand moment that Jesus lays out for everyone who wants to follow him. Jesus is going to tell us two things today: **THE GOSPEL**...the glorious news that is the bedrock of the Christian faith... and **THE COST of believing the GOSPEL**. And he spends more time on the cost than on the gospel itself. As if he knows everyone, even his closest followers, will wage a war in their own soul over whether or not the cost is worth it.

So this is a major moment for these first followers of Jesus. And I believe it is a major moment today for each of us. We are just going to follow the passage here mark 8.31-38. We’ll see the gospel, and the cost.

The Gospel

31 Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days.

Necessary. It must happen. See **the gospel is news about events what those events mean for you**. And here Jesus is talking about the events of the gospel. Jesus must suffer, must be rejected, must be killed and must rise after 3 days.

They MUST happen. Not might happen, must happen. There is a necessity to these events.

And verse 32 says he spoke plainly about it.

32 He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

Which means when Peter rebukes him it's not because he didn't understand. It was because he understood and this was NOT the gospel Peter wanted. Peter wanted the triumphant gospel. The VICTORIOUS gospel. The "FINALLY WE ARE GOING TO BE ON TOP OF THE WORLD" gospel. Peter rebukes Jesus because he doesn't think this is NECESSARY.

And then Jesus Rebukes his rebuke

33 But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns."

Peter, you don't like that I MUST die. You don't like this necessity of my suffering, rejection, & death. You would like to counsel me that there is another way. This can't be God's way...And while you probably didn't realize it...When you rebuke what God has said must happen...you are speaking the oldest words of Satan himself. And this theme...valuing human concerns over God's concerns...Jesus is going to make that the emphasis of the next few verses. THE REASON you rebuke the gospel is because you have your agenda. And the necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus doesn't work with your agenda.

So let's take a second and talk about what it is that Satan, Peter, and all humanity rebukes Jesus about. It's a question a lot of skeptics ask: **Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?**

1. God Keeps his Promises – The Son of Man must suffer because the scriptures foretold that he would suffer, die, and rise again. Isaiah 53 says that he would be despised, afflicted, crushed, oppressed and that he would die. He had to be pierced in his hands and feet because Psalm 22 said he would be. He had to be spit on because Isaiah 50 said he would be. As John Piper said "The script for Jesus' suffering was written down hundreds of years earlier."

The son of man must also Rise again...because Isaiah 53 says he would. This was God's plan and according to Revelation 13.8 before the foundation of the world God had planned for the lamb to be slain. And I want you to hear it is good news that God keeps his promises. The whole idea of faith is based in the certainty of God. God keeps his promises. So if he says when you walk through the valley I will be with you...HE WILL BE WITH YOU. If he says he will replace your anxiety with the peace of Christ that surpasses understanding...HE WILL. And if he says one day you will be with him in paradise...you will be.

A Child finds comfort in the promise of a parent who says...go to sleep, I will see you in the morning. And they have absolute trust in their parent. That TRUST in the parent makes that promise a certainty in their mind. So they sleep.

2. We owed a debt to God we could not pay – Listen when someone really wrongs you, a debt is established that has to

be paid by someone. It can happen financially right? If you are having a party at your apartment and a friend accidentally smashes a lamp...one of two things can happen. EITHER you can say "That will be \$300 please" (cause you like boujie lamps) OR you can say "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of it." If you do the latter one...what happens to the \$300? Either you have to pay it yourself or you have to lose \$300 worth of light and get used to a darker room. Either your friend pays the cost, or you absorb the cost.¹

Debts are not just financial though are they? Someone harms your reputation...that's a debt. Someone takes something you can't get back...that's a debt. Someone takes the opportunity meant for you...that's a debt. That person owes you. And when they do, only one of two things can happen. One option is you make them pay...you ruin their reputation...you destroy their opportunities. The problem with this way is that as you make them pay, you yourself change for the worst. Vengeance never makes you fulfilled. It hardens you, makes you colder. That's another reason God said vengeance belongs to him. He knew it would corrode our weak souls.

So what is the alternative? Forgive. But forgiveness means you will suffer instead of the other person. When you want to carry out vengeance and you hold back...IT HURTS. Forgiveness is agony. But it's the only way to break the cycle of retaliation.

¹ Lamp illustration comes from Tim Keller's *Jesus the King* (Penguin Group NY, NY 2011) 100.

When the bible says you have been bought with a price...What its saying is our sin is ultimately against God. And if God is infinitely holy, our sin creates an infinite debt. God says the debt for sin is death. You gotta understand this to get the gospel – we sinners deserve death for sinning against an infinite God. But the only way God can pardon us...and not judge us...is to go to the cross and absorb it in himself. That is why Jesus says it is necessary. I must suffer.

See the cross of Jesus Christ is where the eternal justice of God and Mercy of God intersect. We deserve to pay the debt, but Jesus paid it for us. There's an old hymn I grew up with that is called "Jesus paid it all." All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain he washed it white as snow.

HE KEPT HIS PROMISE, HE PAID THE DEBT...And in doing so...he opened the way for us to know God. Not know *about* God, but to know God. To have a relationship with him. Just like a relationship is harmed by a debt...and the harm to the relationship depends on the size of the debt. Some debts are so big they sever the relationship entirely. Our relationship with God was ruined by our sin. Our rebellion against his ways. And in our rebellion, we rejected the love of God the father we were created to be sustained by. To find peace through. To find wholeness through. This is romans 5.10

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. -- Romans 5:10

THIS IS THE GOSPEL – Because your sin has broken a relationship you cannot fix and created a debt you cannot pay...God who keeps his promises has made a way for you to be forgiven of your sin and reconciled to him. Jesus HAD to suffer in your place, be rejected in your place, DIE in your place, so that he could then rise and defeat death once and for all.

The Gospel in a simple thought:

The Gospel: In love for me, Jesus died and Jesus rose to save me.

And Romans 6.23 calls the gospel the announcement of a GIFT from God to you. You don't earn it. You receive it. And that's the call to many today. RECEIVE IT. BUT...before you do Jesus says count the cost. That's the second half of this text and this sermon

THE COST of believing the GOSPEL

I told It's a gift. There is nothing you can do to EARN it. BUT there is a cost. You cannot receive new life in Christ...and keep your old life. You must decide. Here's what he says to the crowd and it's what Jesus says to you. I want to read it to you and then help you see the COST. And to Christians I believe one of the reasons we experience very little impact of the gospel in our lives is because we have chosen to ignore what Jesus says right here. So this is for all of us today.

34 Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his

life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. 36 For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? 37 What can anyone give in exchange for his life? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." --

Mark 8:31-38

Here is the cost of following Jesus

1. You must let go of your life–

Jesus is the King, but he's the king on a cross. And therefore to follow him into new life he says you too must go to a cross. You must die. But how? We don't die as payment for sin...we aren't physically crucified because Jesus was. So what does it mean?

That's what verse 35 & 36 help explain. It seems a little like a riddle but its actually quite clear. Whoever wants to save his life...Look – that's what we are all trying to do. Save our lives. It's why you are on a diet. It's why you are on a first name basis with your cardiologist. It's why you are on a dating app. It's why you wear a mask. You are trying to save your life and make it good. Make it complete. If anyone wants to save his life...we all want to save our lives and saving our lives is the goal of every religion.

Every culture has a way to gain respectability so that you can have a sense of self worth. Whether it's a traditional culture that tells you you have to build a family & a legacy to have self-worth. OR an individualistic culture that says you have to

build wealth & reputation to have self worth. Every culture every religion tells you the way to save your life is through achievement. But Jesus says it won't work.

In fact...even if you gain the WHOLE WORLD...it won't be enough to fill the void in your soul. If you are building your identity on who loves you or what career you have...if anything goes wrong you will lose your self with it.

IF ANYONE had the whole world...and was able to look into tomorrow and see their soul lost. And a trade was offered...you can save your soul but it will cost you everything...you'd do it in a heartbeat. But here's the problem – how do you know you are losing your soul? There isn't a check engine light above your right eye that says...SOUL BEING LOST. PLEASE TURN BACK.

- Alone example: Guy starving...he eventually says...what good is gaining 500k if we are permanently injured through starvation and unable to enjoy it? AWESOME truth. How do we know our souls are starving?

You know it by your life. You are unfulfilled even when your life scorecard says you should be most fulfilled. You are different in private than in public. You are more prone to be withdrawn, isolated, bitter, you blame shift, you distract yourself with things so you don't have to ever have a moment alone with you and God. Because you are NOT ready to deal with YOU right now. You are losing your soul to gain the world. And Jesus says...not only is it a tragedy, it won't end

well anyway. That's the little clue in verse 37. What can anyone give in exchange for his life?

In other words...we are all going to die. And nothing we have will go with us. I've done a lot of funerals and never once has there been a suitcase. Can't take it with you. Everyone will lose their life. SO why not lose your life THE ONLY WAY that allows you to FIND TRUE LIFE?

2. You must let go of your life FOR Jesus and the Gospel

Jesus doesn't just tell us to lose our lives for nothing. Like some eastern mysticism. He says lose your life FOR him and the gospel. It's specific and its awesome. He says LOOK at his love for you. Don't just think "I'm gonna live God's way." NO it STARTS with...see the son of God loving you. Take strength from God's love for you. From his sacrifice for you. Take assurance not on whether you improved your sales numbers or your boss approved your promotion...That old approach is gone. YOU ARE FREE! Instead, find your identity in Jesus and his love for you.

Take joy here. Find identity here. Take a stand & build your life HERE. This is verse 38. A haunting verse because it reveals what is at stake.

38 For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

This was Peter's problem. He wasn't ashamed of Jesus...just of Jesus' words. And I think this is the problem for many Christians. You are cool to associate with Jesus. Just wish he didn't say that stuff about Hell, about him being the only way, because it doesn't play well with your friends. Like its Bad PR and what you really mean is Jesus will make you look bad.

If that is you, you are still trying to save your life. And that means you will not only lose your life here, but millions of angels and Jesus Christ and God the Father will be ashamed of you when he comes to judge the world. There is nothing short of eternity at stake here.

You must lose your love of this world. Lose your self-importance. The *experience* of the gospel is that you will find Jesus to be so great, so valuable, so worthy, so fulfilling...that you will gladly give up Earthly Possessions and Earthly Praise. for him. Those are the two great magnets that tug on our souls. Earthly Possessions and Earthly Praise. We crave them and Jesus says we pursue them to our own demise. BUT, we can be free.

Jesus told his followers that the Kingdom of God was like a treasure hidden in a field. A TREASURE. The guy who found the TREASURE. Sold all he had so he could buy the field because there WAS TREASURE!!! THAT'S WHAT Jesus OFFERS. TREASURE. Life abundant here and life eternal. And on top of that...if you try to find your life in what you have here...you'll only lose it all anyway.

C.S. Lewis....

Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look to Christ and you will find Him, and with him everything else thrown in."

Lose your life for him and you will find true life. Here's how it starts: Repent and believe. To lose your old life...turn from it. Tell God you want him. You want to believe. Christian...repent and believe. Repent from trying to have Jesus AND your life. Repent from where you've been ashamed of him. Turn back to him and lay it all down before him.

Be Baptized – This is your act of belief. Next weekend we are going to baptize and this isn't about being committed to Mercy or looking good in front of people. NO its professing I believe **Jesus died, and Jesus rose, to save me. He tells me to be baptized and so I will gladly. I will not be ashamed of the Gospel I profess instead I will stand in it thankful!**

PRAY

THE BENCH

Option 2

Loving this show on History Channel right now called Alone. Basically, 10 people get dropped off in really harsh climate. Vancouver Island british Columbia. In October. It's terrible. Each contestant gets 10 items and a camera. They are dropped like 20 miles from each other. And whoever survives the longest...wins the grand prize of 500,000. Man...its awesome. These people hunt, fish, forage. They are eating seaweed & slugs. And the isolation does a number on them. They get medical checks every couple of weeks or so because they lose so much weight that their bodies go into starvation mode which can have long-term damaging effects. So the medical team sometimes forces them to quit because they don't want them to die and the contestants are so delirious they can't make that decision themselves. IT'S AWESOME.

Well I was watching the other night and this 26 year old single guy says this into the camera that I thought was perfect for our time today...What good is 500,000 if I'm so messed up from this I can't even enjoy it? He realizes even this insane amount of money...comes at too great a cost.

THAT RIGHT THERE is the kind of question Jesus is going to ask his followers today. He's going to say "what does it benefit someone if they gain the whole world and lose their life?" And the easy answer is...NOTHING. But the harder question is...how do you know you are losing your soul? Can you know before its too late? How can you save it?

These are the questions we will get into today. Jesus is going to draw a line in the sand and say what seems crazy at first...the ONLY WAY you can save your life...is if you lose your

life for him and his gospel. That The only thing you can spend your life on and find greater life in return...is him. Let's get into it. Mark 8.

C.S. Lewis on the last page of his book Mere Christianity says "Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, the death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and the death of your whole body in the end: Submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will really be yours. Nothing in your that has not died will ever be raised from the dead.

Doesn't that seem strange? Why was it necessary for Jesus to go through all of this? While this could be an ENTIRE sermon series right here, let me summarize it this way: The CROSS of Jesus Christ is where the eternal justice of God and Mercy of God intersect. If we each agree that we are sinners. We choose our own ways, we mess up, we disobey authority, we cheat, lie, etc. The bible talks about that sin as creating a legal debt we as God's creation now owe to God our creator. You park illegally and get a ticket, ticket has to get paid. That's a debt. Because God is infinitely holy, no amount of sin...

Intro Option 1

And the way Jesus talks about this decision to follow him...its counter intuitive. He's going to say in order to save your life...you have to lose it. Seems non-sensical at first.

The other day I took my oldest son up to this Rock Quarry in Mooresville. They've got lots of ledges you can jump off of & its pretty fun. They've got this cable swing that we watched a lot of people swing on and then fly off into the quarry. So naturally I had to try. Well we get up there and I'm standing on the platform, holding the bar the cable swing is attached to...I'm starting to lean out over the edge and the guy is like...listen...if you do that you are going to hurt yourself. You need to lean back and just pick up your feet. That feels so wrong. Like I'm just gonna scrape the platform if I do that. He says no, The tension on the cable does the work. If you remove that tension by leaning forward, you'll free fall and when the cable gets tight you wont be able to hold on. & you'll crash into the water. And everybody will laugh at you. Just lean back & lift your feet. Trust the cable. And I did and it was awesome. I was told to do the exact opposite of what my self-preservation instincts were telling me.

That's what Jesus is going to do today. Jesus is going to say if you want true life...you will have to surrender your one life, the only one you have, and follow him. Nothing you can do in your own power, instead you lean back and trust completely in his power. In short the claim of Christianity is: **The only hope you have is to surrender your whole life to Jesus.**

So as we follow Jesus and the disciples again today I want you to assess your own life. If you believe Jesus is who he says he is...have you surrendered your WHOLE life him? I couldn't

swing with one foot still on the platform and you can't follow Jesus with only part of your life. It's all or nothing. Let's look at it.

31 Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days.

- Necessary. Doesn't that seem strange? Why was it necessary for Jesus to go through all of this? While this could be an ENTIRE sermon series right here, let me summarize it this way:
- The CROSS of Jesus Christ is where the eternal justice of God and Mercy of God intersect. If we each agree that we are sinners. We choose our own ways, we mess up, we disobey authority, we cheat, lie, etc. The bible talks about that sin as creating a legal debt we as God's creation now owe to God our creator. You park illegally and get a ticket, ticket has to get paid. That's a debt. Because God is infinitely holy, no amount of sin...
- One other thing I want you to see: Jesus is laying out the path of the gospel. And its also the path he is going to call each of us to walk. He is rejected...he tells us we will be rejected by the world for believing in him. He is killed. He tells us we have to lose our lives if we are going to follow him. He rises from the dead. He tells us we have NEW LIFE when we receive his salvation for our sins.

32 He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns."

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

34 Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it. 36 For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? 37 What can anyone give in exchange for his life? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." -- Mark 8:31-38 (CSB)

And the question for us is: *Whose approval do we crave most? Whose praise are you most desperate not to lose? In whose presence do you fear most being shamed? Which relationship is most precious to you?*