

# JESUS PREDICTS HIS CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Mark 8:31-38

Key Verse: 8:31

*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.*

In today's passage, Jesus predicts his upcoming suffering, death and resurrection. This is the essence of the gospel. This is the core of the Christian faith. May God help us to come to know personally the meaning of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection!

## I. THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER (31)

Look at verse 31. *"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."* For the first time in his ministry, Jesus began to teach his disciples about his upcoming suffering, death and resurrection. He did so right after Peter's confession of faith. When Jesus asked his disciples the question, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Up until this point, Jesus showed them who he was so that they could establish a personal relationship with him. Jesus took them everywhere and taught them the word of God whenever he had opportunity. He did many miracles right before their eyes. He opened the eyes of a blind man, he fed a crowd of 5,000 with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and he drove out demons from a young man who would cut himself with stones because of the torment. Jesus also showed them his compassionate heart toward an immoral woman, a selfish tax collector and a proud Pharisee. Finally, the disciples got it. Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Jesus must have been very happy to hear the answer. The countless hours he spent with them were not in vain. So did Jesus say, "You've made my day! Let us have a party to celebrate!"? No. Jesus became serious and began to teach them a serious matter.

After making sure they knew who he was, Jesus began to teach them what he would do. He told them he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and the teachers of the law and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. This was not something the disciples expected to hear from Jesus. But Jesus began to teach them about his suffering and death. Who wants to talk about his upcoming suffering and death? Why did Jesus say, "I must suffer and I must be killed"?

It is because the way of the cross is God's way of saving the sinful humanity. When man sinned against God, his heart was filled with pain (Ge 6:6). His heart was broken. The righteous God could have abandoned the ungrateful mankind, like we throw away trash. But God, out of his great mercy, made a plan for world salvation. He devised a long-term redemptive plan right after he discovered man's rebellion against him (Ge 3:15). Later, his salvation plan was prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah who said, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6).

Finally, God sent his one and only Son Jesus to this world. God came down to this world to save sinners like you and me, because we sinners could not go up to him. Why should the one and only Son of God come to this world in a human form? This is more than like president of a big country going to a ghetto area and decided to live in a pig pen. John the Baptist was deeply moved by the Son of God who came to this world to save sinners. So when he saw Jesus coming toward him, he exclaimed, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). Jesus came as the Lamb of God. God had told the Israelites to kill a year-old lamb and sprinkle the blood for the atonement of their sins. But this yearly ritual could not save them from their sin and death. It was just a foreshadow of what God would do to solve our sin problem permanently. And Jesus became the "Lamb of God." God sacrificed his one and only Son to die on the cross so that his innocent blood may wash away our sin-stained blood and make us new people. When John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," he knew the heart of God. And we should meditate on the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death upon our own lives.

We say that our salvation is a free gift. That is true. We cannot earn our salvation because God already has done the work. But we should never forget that someone had to pay the dearest price for our sins. Jesus paid the price with his own life. This was how Jesus became our Messiah. Jesus shouldered all our sins and transgressions and died on the cross. He prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51). This signaled the removal of the barrier between the holy God and sinful man. We have been set free because of Jesus' suffering and death. May God help us to know the meaning of the death of Jesus as we continue to study the Bible!

## II. IF ANYONE WANTS TO FOLLOW JESUS (32-34)

How did the disciples respond to Jesus' prediction of his upcoming suffering, rejection, death and resurrection? Look at verse 32. *"He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."* Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, may I see you alone?" He took Jesus to a corner and began to rebuke him. Perhaps Peter said to Jesus, "I hope you were kidding when you said all these things. What are you talking about? You are the Christ, the Messiah, and King. Why should a king suffer, be rejected, and die? You are talking nonsense. Don't be ridiculous."

We can understand why Peter reacted this way. After all, all Jewish people expected a political Messiah would come and liberate them from their suffering. Perhaps Peter envisioned that Jesus the Messiah would be like Alexander the Great who conquered many countries with his superior military strategies and gave his people something to boast about.

Most of all, Peter did not like to suffer himself. If Jesus, his Messiah, must suffer, he knew he must suffer as well. And he did not like this. He probably said, "I didn't give up my job as a fishing boat captain to suffer. I paid my due following the Messiah King. Now I

want my glory." Besides, he cared about his rabbi. He loved Jesus. He didn't want him to suffer and die.

How did Jesus help Peter? Look at verse 33. *But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

Jesus looked at his disciples before rebuking Peter, because they had the same idea. In fact, all of us are like Peter. We don't want to suffer. We'd rather have glory without suffering. We want to gain without pain. But Jesus told Peter, "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (33). Jesus used a strong word here, calling Peter Satan. We learn that we can become Satan's prey if we follow our own desires rather than God's word or have in mind the things of men rather than the things of God.

What percentage of your 24 hours a day do you think is used for the things of God and the things of men? 70-30? 50-50? Or 20-80? We admit that it's impossible not to think about the things of men because we still live in this world. Jesus knows that. But the problem is we often let our thought world be dominated by things of this world. At our Wednesday meeting, one student asked us to pray for him to make time to pray in the middle of the day. He prays in the morning and at night. But he gets busy during the day. Still he desires to make time to be with the Lord. This is a good way of having things of God in mind. In fact, all of us should at least start each day with our Daily Bread and prayer.

Let us read verse 34. *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* Jesus told them that they must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him, if they wanted to come after Jesus. Notice that Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said this. His command is applied not just to the disciples and spiritual leaders, but to all believers like you and me.

First, Jesus says we must deny ourselves. Each of us has ego that is bigger than a mountain. This ego makes us think of us better than others. This ego makes us proud. So it is hard to deny ourselves. How can we do this? The only way is to learn to put God's word above our own ideas. Before he became a disciple, Peter was a fisherman in the Sea of Galilee. One early morning, he returned from his all-night fishing with an empty boat. Then Jesus told him to cast his nets on again. Peter thought it was a ridiculous thing to do. The water was shallow. It was not a good time to fish. He was an expert fisherman. Jesus was a village rabbi. What did he know about fishing? It would be like Maria telling Dr. John how to care for diabetic patients or Pauline telling Caleb how to fix Unix program codes. But somehow, Peter said, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets" (Lk 5:5). Do you know what happened? He caught such a large number of fish that the nets began to break. Peter denied his own ideas and obeyed God's word, and he experienced a miracle. May God help us to deny our own ideas and desires and obey the word of God!

Again how can we deny ourselves? Living in a pragmatic and individualistic society and given our selfish nature, this is a very difficult thing to do. The only way to do this is to

remember Jesus and how he denied himself. Jesus is the Son of God. But he denied himself and renounced the heavenly glory, honor and power of his kingdom, and he came down to be born in a stable and was laid in a manger. He served sinners as their shepherd and friend all through his public life. And he gave his life on the cross as a ransom for our sins. In Gethsemane, he struggled to follow God's will over his own in his intense prayers that his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Lk 22:44) . He denied himself and was crucified on the cross. Jesus denied himself to save us and now he is asking us to deny ourselves.

Next, in order to follow Jesus, we must take up our cross. What does this mean? You may be thinking, "Well, I have many crosses to bear, such as my work and my children." Students bear the burden of school studies. But clearly Jesus does not mean this kind of cross, because those who don't follow Jesus have to bear the same burden. So what kind of cross does Jesus want us to take up in order to follow him? When Jesus called Peter, he told him, "From now on, you will catch men" (Lk 5:10). Peter had been struggling with his job and family responsibilities. That was his cross. But when he became a disciple of Jesus, he had to take up another cross—a different kind. It was to take care of other people—a cross of mission. After his resurrection, Jesus visited Peter at the Sea of Galilee. Peter was dejected because of what happened in Jerusalem and had returned to his old fishing job. He had forgotten about his confession of Christ. But Jesus served him breakfast and wanted to restore their love relationship and said, "Simon, do you love me? Feed my sheep." Jobs, school work and family are important for us. But to follow Jesus, we must take up our cross of mission!

### III. LOSING LIFE TO SAVE IT (35-38)

Look at verses 35-37. *For 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? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"* This is a radical teaching. We should lose life in order to save it? What a paradox! Peter thought Jesus was talking nonsense about suffering and dying to become the Messiah. Now Jesus told him to lose his life in order to save it. It did not make sense to him. But Jesus told him the truth that only through death comes life. It is the mystery of dying in order to live. Jesus explained this mystery in John 12:24: "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." A grain of wheat is unfruitful as long as it remains in a safe barn as a shining seed. Only when it falls to the cold ground and dies, it bears fruit. Jesus teaches us that life is like a kernel of wheat. Life should not be selfish, but be fruitful. We have a hope of eternal life in heaven only because Jesus became a kernel of wheat that fell to the ground and died.

So how can we lose life for Jesus? It means to die to our sinful desires and follow his words. We can die in small ways, like studying the word of God sincerely when we feel like playing video games, or writing a sincere Bible testimony when we feel like watching a movie or have a 1:1 Bible study with students when we feel like hanging out with friends for fun. Nobody wants to die. Everybody knows that his or her life is the most important. But we should know that our life in Christ is more important than life in this world. We

will die sooner or later; this is the first death. But if we live for Christ, we will live forever in heaven with Christ; we will not taste the second death. This is what Jesus means when he says in verse 36. "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"

Look at verse 38. *If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.* "This is a warning. At the same time, it is a promise. Jesus will come back in God's glory with the holy angels. As we wait for his second coming, what should we do? We should live a life that is worthy of his sacrifice. If we live a life that is ashamed of Jesus and his words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of us when he comes in God's glory. When do we become ashamed of Jesus and his words? Long time ago, I had a Bible student who came to our weekly study with his Bible in a brown bag. He didn't want people find out he was a Bible student. This is an extreme case, but we may be guilty of doing the same in more subtle ways. If we are ashamed of someone, we don't want to be with him; we don't want to follow him. We don't want to commit our lives to him. But Jesus is our Savior who gave his life to save us. If we truly knew this grace, we would not be ashamed of him or his words. Paul declared in Romans 1:18: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

This morning, we thought about the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death for us. We love Jesus and we want to follow him because of this grace of salvation. Jesus commands us that we should deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. May God help us to remember his grace and follow him as committed disciples!