

THE VALUABLE DAY

Mark 8:34-38

INTRODUCTION

The war for our generation centers on one word: truth. We are in a truth crisis. Why has this crisis come about? The World we live in has rejected the eternal transcendent God for an internal experience-informed god.

TEXT: Mark 8:34–38 (ESV)

34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.

36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?

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

8 OBSERVATIONS

1. Jesus speaks to both disciples and seekers.

Jesus had finished a conversation with Peter, telling the great apostle that his mind was in the wrong place, that he was thinking not of the things of God but of the things of men. Peter was committed to the wrong kingdom in his thinking.

But Jesus did not want Peter to be the only recipient of this message, so He opened up His audience:

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples

He wanted everyone to hear what He had to say because this message was equally applicable to both committed followers of Jesus and to seekers who were trying to make up their minds.

2. Full commitment is required from day one.

Like joining the Army or jumping from a high dive, following Jesus only works well if the commitment is 100% from day one. A person might think long before joining the Army, or taking a step off a high dive, but when the thinking is over, the commitment is all or nothing. So it is with Jesus, who said to both the disciples and the crowd:

he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

This radical statement echoes through the ages. Would you come after Jesus? Step one is to consent to being executed. No self-directed people allowed. No one with a personal agenda is allowed. No one with his or her own goals, apart from the kingdom. All is sacrificed to the

Leader. Judas never figured that out, but he did not know it till the last minute. You don't wade into Jesus like entering a cold pool. You dive in deep, and don't swim to the edge.

To the disciples, as to Peter, Jesus' message is: you made this choice. There is no going back now. You burned your bridges in the harbor when you landed on land. You must continue to think like one fully surrendered to the Kingdom of God and never go back to thinking as one committed to the ways of the world.

But He is also speaking to the crowd. Choosing to follow Jesus does not involve test drives. Either you are in or you are out. There is no period of trying things out. And yet the crowd follows, and most of them are not committed to Jesus. They are seeking. He is letting them know that they should not mistake their pleasure in being part of the crowd with being committed.

In this church, as in most Bible following churches, the 80-20 rule prevails. 20 Percent give 80% of the finances and do 80% of the work. That's the way it is. That bothers many church leaders, but not me. I just keep in mind that 80% of the people have yet to commit to Jesus, but they don't know it yet. I'm fishing for you folks the hardest, while reminding the 20% to set the right example.

3. Full commitment to a message is required.

A careful reading of the passage shows that the commitment is bifurcated. There are two objects of your commitment. What are they? Look again:

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

The point of view God requires: change your direction. Don't seek to extend your life. Don't seek to build your life. Instead, for the sake of Jesus, and the gospel, lose your life. Following Jesus, the man? We get that. But following the gospel? What is that? Gospel means, "Great News."

So, your life is not forfeited just for Jesus, but also for the Great News that He brings to the world. The Great News is a message. In other words, your life is to be voluntarily laid down for the sake of words. Words. Have you given up your life for words? Not just any words, of course, but all that Jesus taught with His words; all that He instructed His Apostles to teach; all that He sent the prophets to teach; and the centerpiece of the message being that Jesus died to save sinners like us.

Committed to Jesus? Okay. Committed to words?

4. Commitment to Jesus and the gospel destroys your life.

The commitment to Jesus is not: "You might lose your life, you know. It might happen. It might not." This text is not saying that you might be killed for your faith. No, it is saying that you have already willingly destroyed your own life for Jesus and the gospel.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

Imagine a man at age 18. His adult life stands before him. He sets certain goals for himself – goals regarding what he desires to do, to achieve, to acquire, where he might live, who he might spend his time with, the places he would like to travel, and all that he wants out of life. All his

life is before him. Then Jesus comes along and says, “Follow Me.” The man looks at his future, his dreams, his goals, all he wants to have and become, all that he is and has in the moment, and asks, “What do I do with all this, my life?” Jesus’ answer: “Destroy it. Kill it. Crucify it. Execute it. Forget it. Follow Me.”

The man has a decision to make. “How about I follow you, but take some stuff with me.” Nope. “You mean it’s all or nothing?” Yep. “Well I don’t know if I’m ready for that level of commitment.” Then you may not follow.

“But my life is valuable to me! It is precious. It has worth!” Destroy it.
Does this sound dangerous to you? Who ever said that Jesus is safe?

5. Commitment to Jesus and the gospel saves your life.

If destroying your life for the sake of the gospel and Jesus seems radical, really, it is the only wise choice. Why? Because the life you think you want, the life you think you have, the life you think you can control, you do not really have, you cannot control, and ultimately you may not keep it.

35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.

If you would rather do your own thing, go your own way, hold on to your life, guess what? –It will be destroyed. What you have will be destroyed. But if you will destroy your life, fully commit to Jesus, then your life will be saved. I’m not saying that God holds a gun to your head, but He might be holding an atomic missile to your head.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? –v. 36-37

Jesus uses logic to convince you and I that it is worth it to give all. What is your life worth? Whatever you think you have here –you will lose. Is it worth it to be destroyed forever in hell to have whatever you think the world can give you here? One day you die and the days of eternity set upon you, what good will your life behind you be?

6. Being ashamed of Jesus’ words is equal to being ashamed of Jesus.

To follow Jesus is to be committed to Him AND His message, the gospel. Likewise, in the judgment day, God will concern Himself with both your allegiance to Jesus and to the things He said.

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

Someone might say, “I was not ashamed of Jesus! I proclaimed Him all the time!” Were you ashamed of what He had to say? Were you ashamed that He said in order to follow Him you must die? Or His teachings on marriage and divorce and sex? Or on His teachings about male and female? Or His teachings on hell and heaven? Or His teachings on religions being wrong, and Him being the only way? Or His teaching that lying, cowardice, sex outside of marriage, gay sex are all evil? Or that all people need to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus or they will be

punished by God who is angry at sin? Or that abortion is not about freedom but about destroying the most valuable work of God on the earth? Or that you must forgive those who hate you? Or that you should bless those who persecute you? Or that all people, even the ones you don't like, can have their sins forgiven because of the cross? All His words. Do you speak them? Do you know them? Do you stand up for them? Or do you stay silent? Or do you ignore the ones that lead to conflict? Or are you embarrassed about the gospel?

7. Our world is adulterous and sinful.

Jesus acknowledges the peer pressure of our world. He acknowledges the group-think. In every generation, standing up for the truths of Jesus is against the grain. Even in nations with rich Christian histories, there has never been a time when Jesus' teachings did not cause chafing among one's peers in the world. Yet, Jesus gives us logical and reasonable perspective on the situation:

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed...

This world that you live in is, according to Jesus, adulterous and sinful. In the generation of the disciples it was so. The generations of all times, it is so. The world you live in is filled with people who celebrate the things that violate the righteous goodness of God. The world you live opposes and offends God regularly. If you walked into a crowd and everyone was insulting a woman who turned out to be your good and faithful mother, would you remain silent? No. Then why are you ashamed of the words of Jesus in a generation destined for hell?

Do you remember when the thoughts of others ruled your life? Is that today? Isn't that the appeal of so much of social media? Why does it matter? This world is filled with Adam's children, each one a rebellious sinner, hating God. Those children of Adam who are born again, and become children of God, why should they be ashamed of being made righteous by the blood of Jesus? Why should they be ashamed of His words?

8. The return of Jesus is the only moment in your life worth placing value upon.

The return of Jesus is the only moment in your life worth valuing. This statement seems counter to truth, doesn't it? After all, are not all moments important? Are not all moments valuable? Well of course they are valuable –but they are not worth valuing in comparison to the day Jesus returns in Glory. In fact, I would submit to you for your consideration, that every day of your life only gains value if you give it up for sake of the first day of the new age, when Jesus has returned. Let me show you what I mean.

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

The Son of Man will return, in the glory of God the Father, with His holy messengers with Him. This day is coming. For most Christians who have lived, the day comes long after they have died, but they will return with Christ and get new bodies. For many Christians, this day of glory will come when they still live –and they will be changed, joining Jesus and the faithful who have gone before. And on this day, there will be a reckoning. The world will be separated into two groups –one group committed to Jesus, one made up of those who stand as sinners.

On that day, which you will certainly experience with me, and everyone you know, all that will matter will be: Did I lose my life for Jesus and His words? Or did I preserve my life, valuing each moment as important, and now they are all gone?

If you did the first: if you destroyed your life, followed Jesus, and valued only this day of His glory, then you will look back on a life faithfully lived. If you value the day of Glory, then every day of this fleeting life will be okay and lived well. If you live only for the moment, then you will lose all days and be ashamed forever.

Summary:

Christian, are you truly a Christian? Have you stepped off the diving board, or have you spent a good deal of your time marching around up there, wondering if you should? They are not the same. To follow Jesus is to volunteer for execution, and follow through with it. But you have a great hope, for all who lose their lives will be saved forever, and find true life.

Seeker, are you considering Jesus, and trying to figure out the cost? Let me help. This is easy. The cost is everything. What have you got? All of it. Do you want to follow Him? Do you want to jump off end of the board into the water of life? Then die to everything else you have and are, and come on in, “the water is fine.”

All, we live each moment of this life with an eye to a day that has not yet arrived. This is the way we survive both good and evil days without flinching, without quitting, without falling. As Jesus taught us through His apostle, Peter:

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. –1 Peter 1:13

And,

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. –1 Peter 1:6-7

And,

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. –1 Peter 4:12-13

Where do we set our hope? Where? On the grace that will be brought on that great day.
It is time to commit.