

Mark 8 (Part 2): 27-38 - Taking Up Your Cross

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Last week we covered, in fact, we ended I think, with verse 30. I want to just go back and cover 27, 28, 29, 30 again. And the reason I'm doing that is because it moves into the rest of the conversation. It takes place here at the end of the chapter, beginning in verse 27 of Mark chapter 8.

It says, "And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do the people say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him." (ESV)

We're really at about the halfway point right here. We're just at about the halfway mark of Mark's Gospel. And it is right here at that halfway point, that the author chooses to bring a climactic conversation to our attention. Where Jesus stops His followers at some point and just begins to pose questions to them about who He is.

First asking, *"Who do the people say that I am?"* And you can tell from the responses of Jesus's disciples that there was plenty of confusion to go around related to who was Jesus. It should have been easy-peasy.

I mean, He fulfilled every prophecy related to the coming Messiah. And yet they're all going, oh, I think it's John the Baptist. If they only would have been around long enough, they'd have known that John the Baptist and Jesus, were seen in the same place. Well, that's not possible.

Oh, it must be Elijah, because of all the miracles I expect and stuff. There was all kinds of confusion. By the way, that hasn't changed. There's still plenty of that to go around.

But then Jesus asks them a more personal sort of a thing on this, *"...who do you say that I am?"* What a great question. Great question to ask anybody. Who do you say Jesus is? Because at the end of the day— and I want you to hear me on

this. At the end of the day, all of our other peripheral issues hardly matter, except understanding and agreeing upon the biblical account of who Jesus is.

Who He said He is. Who the Bible says that He is, prophetically, and so forth. That we would know and understand the accurate answer to this question is paramount.

We get so whacked at just, off base and crazy talking to people about this, that, and the other thing. And we'll argue with them till we're blue in the face about: the timing of the rapture, whether or not the Church is going to go through the Tribulation or not, well, you just don't get it! And all these other things, that we would focus on.

And honestly, really one of the most significant and important questions to ask and answer is: Who is Jesus Christ? Who is the Man? And a person's answer to that question is absolutely huge. We can't begin to under, overestimate— there we go— the importance to that... The answer to that question: "...*who do you say that I am?*" Now of course, Peter's response was correct. You are the Messiah. "*You are the Christ.*"

But the reason that the question was even asked at this particular juncture, was because Jesus needed that to be established properly, so that He could go on and say what He was going to say next. That's why I wanted to read these 4 verses again. Because as we springboard into what comes after this, you're going to see that the answer "*You are the Christ...*," understanding who Jesus is properly, is going to help us understand what comes next, properly.

And what He begins to speak of next is what He's going to do. And it says here in verse 31, "*And he began to teach them...*" Notice that He didn't just talk to them about what He was going to do. He taught them. He literally taught. And I have to assume that this means He made reference to some Old Testament prophecies. Probably brought up prophecies in Isaiah and Psalms to talk about the Christ, or the Messiah, who would come and suffer. And that was a completely foreign idea to these Jewish men, as it relates to the Messiah.

They had in their Scriptures prophecies about the Messiah suffering. But they ignored them. They only focused on the ones that spoke of the conquering Messiah. It says here in verse 31, "*And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and (ultimately) be killed, and after three days rise again.*"

I think they... I don't know how much of what He just said they understood, what He just taught. They probably didn't get the part about rising again. And if they did, didn't understand it.

But, we know in this passage, that Jesus made this very clear. Because in verse 32, if you look at the very first few words of that verse, it says, *"And he said this plainly."* In other words, no parables, no veiled illusions to the point.

He just came right out and said, guys, the Messiah, the Son of Man, will suffer many things at the hands of the religious leaders. And He will be turned over to the Gentiles, who will crucify Him. And then He will rise on the third day. This is what's going to happen to Me. I mean, this is... He's being very pointed, very specific about these things.

And apparently it got through because even though Peter understood what Jesus was saying, he simply refused to accept it. We'll see that as we read on here in the next few verses. Again, this idea of a suffering Messiah was just a little too much for him. It's like, what in the world? That doesn't even compute.

It says here in the rest of verse 32 that, *"And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."* That's a pretty amazing idea, isn't it? By the way, the word in the Greek here for rebuke, is the same word that is used to describe how Jesus would speak to the demons, who were invested in human hosts when He would rebuke them. And tell them to be quiet. Because they were constantly trying to expose who He was. And it's the exact same idea.

Peter is basically telling Jesus, to be quiet. If you can imagine that. Here's the Son of God, here, God in human flesh, walking among you. And you have the gall to walk up to Him and go, stop talking. Right? It's a strong term.

And what's interesting about this and one of the other reasons I wanted to read the previous four verses to this passage, is that it creates this interesting paradoxical picture, of this man, Peter, who one moment speaks by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus by the way said, in a different gospel account to say, *"You are the Messiah. You are the Son of the Most High God."* And remember, Jesus responded by saying, hey, good on you, Pete. Because that wasn't just you, buddy, that was My Father in Heaven, who revealed that to your heart. Right?

We know that Peter spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And yet here he is, just probably a few minutes later, pulling Jesus aside, telling Him to stop talking. And now I want you to notice who he is speaking by.

Verse 33, *"But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter (We got a little rebuking going back here) and said, "Get behind me, Satan!"* Wow! What's going on here? That's a pretty strong term.

By the way, this does not mean that Peter was demon possessed. It's not what's happening. Peter didn't have a demon. He had some significant, oral-diarrhea problems. Sorry for the crudity of that. But it's... The guy opened his mouth way too often.

But what is happening here, is that Jesus saw in that comment, that Peter is saying the familiar echo of the voice of the devil, who He had heard before. You'll remember during the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, there was all kinds of statements that were very similar to this, as it relates to circumventing the more difficult path of the plan of God. Hey, listen, You don't have to go to the cross, dude. Just get down and worship me and everything You see here is Yours. Right? Because I can give it to anybody I want, Satan said. You don't have to go to the cross. You don't have to... No bloody, dying, messy, struggle of suffering and pain. No rejection by the people. We'll get this thing done without all that fuss and muss. Yeah, that's the voice of the enemy, Satan. (Matthew 4-1-11) And Jesus is hearing it, again.

The problem is He's hearing it through the mouthpiece of Peter, as Peter basically, just says, no! No way this is going to happen to You. It's hard to hear the voice of the enemy coming through someone you love. And we know that Jesus loved Peter. And there are times in our lives that people that we love very much, and who love us very much, will open their mouths... And again, they are potentially believers, maybe not.

But regardless of that, there are times that we hear from them a voice that is not the voice of the Heavenly Father; that is not inspired from heaven above. But is in fact inspired from the pit of hell. And it doesn't mean that they are evil people in and of themselves. Or that they are, again, possessed by a demon or anything like that.

Satan doesn't need to possess somebody to get them to speak for him. All he needs to do is get that person to ignore/refuse to embrace God's Word. And then start to speak from the flesh. And that's all it takes. And you've got a, literally, a message from hell. It's very easy for you and I...

Please understand this people. It's very easy for you and I, as human beings, to ignore the Word of God. And/or, reject the Word of God, and unwittingly

become the mouthpiece of the enemy. We can do it. I've done it. And I know you have too, I'm betting.

And again, it doesn't make you evil. And I hope you're not offended by that. But there are times when we just harden our hearts to what God's Word says. And what comes spilling out of our mouth is not from heaven; it is from hell. And it might be because we're fleshing out, or whatever. I don't know. But it's that paradox of speech and human language that even believers... As believers, we can speak the very words of God one moment, and we can speak the words of the enemy the next.

What does it take to do something like that? Look at... Finish reading verse 33 with me. Here it is. It's encompassed in this statement by Jesus, *"For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."* There it is. See, that's pretty simple, isn't it? What does it take to speak for the enemy? Having your mind set on the things of man and not on the things of God.

Suddenly, now, you might say, well, why isn't... I don't get that pastor Paul? Why is it that, when I'm not focused on God, but I'm focused instead on the things of men, why am I speaking for the enemy? Why am I not just speaking for man?

Why didn't Jesus say to Peter, get behind me, man! You're speaking, you're thinking as a man. You're not thinking like God, you're thinking as a man. But he was stronger, wasn't it? He said, *"Get behind me, Satan!"* Because He heard the voice of Satan in the voice of man. Why is that?

Well, it's for a reason that we often forget, that the Scripture tells us that the whole world is under the dominion of the evil one. He is the prince of the power of the air. And he's the ruler of this world, right now. It's a temporary rulership. But it is his nonetheless.

And we like to conveniently forget that Satan is in a position of rulership, temporary, though it may be. And we just go on our merry way. And we basically forget, that if we're not speaking for the kingdom of God, we're speaking for the kingdom of man, which is under the dominion of Satan. Guys, the kingdom of man is under the dominion of Satan. Simple as that.

I'm sorry. I mean, I know that's a bummer. It's like discouraging to hear that, but it's true from a biblical perspective. And when you and I speak the voice of man, we're speaking the voice of the one who rules man, apart from Christ. And here's Peter, who is unwittingly voicing this thing.

Anyway, this is pretty mind blowing. He says, you're not setting your mind on the things of God, Peter. You're putting them on the things of man. And that means that you're speaking Satan's words. Frightening, isn't it?

Why is it... Again, here's another reason, by the way, that when you and I speak into things that... Let me put it this way. When we speak into the kingdom of God, from the perspective of the kingdom of man, that's when we run into trouble. That's when we begin to really blunder. That's when we begin to say things that are dangerous, damaging, hurtful, and flat out just wrong.

Here's another reason why. Let me show you this passage from Isaiah chapter 55. God says,

Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

...my thoughts are not your thoughts, (You guys know this passage. He says) neither are my ways your ways, declares the LORD.

If God's thoughts are not our thoughts, that means our thoughts are going to be rooted in the kingdom of man, in the narrow understanding of life that man has. The limited perspective on this world and on the kingdom of God that we have, it's very limited.

If it's not founded and grounded in the Word of God, it's going to be founded and grounded in my experience and expertise. Right? And now I'm speaking from the dominion of the enemy. Because he rules the world of men, except for those who are in Christ.

Jesus makes it clear that the ways of man, the thoughts of man, play right into the hands of the enemy. Verse 34. What is needed to avoid this trap? You're ready? *"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.'"* There you go! I should probably just close in prayer right here, right now. These are some of the most powerful words.

And I got to tell you something, when I look at words like this and they come up in my, in the text that I'm teaching, I'm instantly intimidated. Because this is so powerful. I mean, these words are so pregnant with meaning. *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

Now remember something, Jesus just got done telling these guys He was going to die. Remember? He just got done explaining— and Mark says He did it plainly— that He was going to die on a cross. He was very clear about that. And now He adds to that announcement, by saying that, anyone who would choose to come after Him, which of course means to follow Him, must do the same.

What's the antidote to speaking the words of the enemy? Speaking— allowing the voice of the enemy, even as a believer, which I can do and so can you. What is the antidote to that? Right here. If you would come after me, you must take up your cross, deny yourself, and so forth.

You see this life of Christ that you and I are called to, it's a life of dying, dying to self. That's what characterizes it. Jesus refers to it here as denying ourselves. And then He talks about it as, taking up our cross and following Him.

What does it mean to deny yourself? It's a good question. Check out this quote. I found this interesting quote by Warren Wiersbe. Some of you may know of him. He says,

Denying self is not the same as self-denial. We practice self-denial. When for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities, but we deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determined to obey His will.

— Warren Wiersbe

Denying self is not the same thing as self-denial. (He writes) We practice self-denial when, for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities. But we deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determined to obey His will.

You see what he's saying there? He's saying it's possible to have self-denial... Well, let me put it this way. I may deny myself in the sense of giving up something, but I might do it for selfish reasons. I can have a sense of self-denial, temporarily, so that I can get something better, perhaps. It doesn't necessarily mean my attitude or my goals are godly.

But when he talks about, dying to self and denying oneself in that sense from a biblical perspective, it always talks about yielding, surrendering, laying down my will, and saying, God, I want Your will above my own. And the next thing, Jesus talks to them about is taking up their cross. He says, you have to deny yourself and then also take up your cross. And how strange that must've sounded to the disciples.

We've made the cross a thing of beauty. But for them, it was not a thing of beauty. They would never have thought of wearing one around their neck. Now I'm not saying that's a bad thing for you and I. For you, it might be a great symbol of just, the Savior who died for you and was crucified on your behalf. Wonderful.

But I'm just telling you, they would never have done that. Because that was actively being used to execute people. It would be like you having a little pendant of an electric chair. Now that'd be morbid, wouldn't it? I don't think you would do that. To them it was an instrument of death. And that's all it was. And it was a horrific instrument of death.

And here Jesus makes this statement, about, taking up your cross and following Me. Remember, He just told them, I'm going to My death in Jerusalem. Now, do you want to follow Me? I'm going there to die. Do you want to follow Me?

And by the way, bearing your cross is not dealing with the little nuisances and inconveniences of life that we like to talk about. You hear people say from time to time, they'll make reference to that. To something that's annoying in their lives and go, well, I guess it's my cross to bear. That's not what Jesus said here. And that's not what He's referring to. I've heard people even say that of their spouse. Yeah, he's a character, but I guess it's my cross to bear.

No, Jesus is talking here about something quite different. He is talking instead about a true and real death to self, where self dies alongside Jesus. A dying to insisting on my way, my plans, my goals, my body, my this, my that. This is the...

One of the first things you learn— kids learn to say, when they're in the company of another child, usually, is mine. Right? That's all they got to say to some other kid. When some kid comes over to play and they pick up one of their toys, mine! Right? I mean, we'll do it for all kinds of...

I'd never forget when my oldest daughter who's, good grief, just turned 33. When she was a little tiny girl, we were over visiting some people. And they had a small child. And I was... We were all sitting in the living room and I was sitting on the floor. And I was giving—I was playing with this other little girl. I think it was a little girl. I don't remember, a long time ago. And I was just like I'm doing, acting stupid most of the time. And Nelly saw me, just giving attention to this little girl. And she came right over to me and plopped herself down in my lap, to say, mine, sort of a thing. My daddy! And that is us in the glory of our flesh. Right?

And here we come to Jesus, we get saved, we're filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately the Holy Spirit begins to work, a work inside of all of us to stop saying, mine, all the time and start saying, His. And we start doing it with our very lives. And we stop saying, it's my life. And now we say, it's His life. It's His body, it's His gifts that He has given to me. It's His ability, it's His power, it's His strength, it's His money. Well that's a tough one, hey pastor, now you're getting into my business. But yeah it's laying yourself down.

What did Paul talk about it as offer yourselves as living sacrifices. (Romans 12:1) That's the way of saying, Lord, I am yours. This, all that I have, belongs to You. Not mine, Yours. Do you hear the difference of what the world is saying related to their lives?

And when we're talking about bearing a cross, when we're talking about dying to self, we're talking about absolute surrender. Make no mistake about it you guys. The cross is all about surrendering your life to Jesus Christ. You see, you can be saved. You can be born again. And you can still not be surrendered to Jesus. That's very possible. You'll be fairly miserable because the Holy Spirit's going to be on you, constantly.

But you can try living that life of saying, Jesus saved me. He died for me on the cross, but my life is still mine. And that attitude of self-determination, which is extremely worldly. And very much of the flesh. Continues to prevail in our lives to the point where we're wilderness Christians. And it's not a very fun way to live.

Let me tell you where joy begins in the Christian life. Where joy begins, it's at the place of surrender. It's when we surrender to God, that joy begins in our lives. And I mean surrendering your relationships, surrendering your heart, your words, your job, your money, your everything.

You guys remember, there's a song that we sing once in a while. It's been around for quite a while. We don't sing it as much anymore. But I love the lyrics to the words Surrender, the song. Let me put just some of them up there for you.

I'm giving you my heart,
And all that is within
I lay it all down, for the sake of you my king
I'm giving you my dreams,
Laying down my rights
Giving up my pride,
For the promise of new life

I'm giving you my heart,
And all that is within
I lay it all down, for the sake of you my king
I'm giving you my dreams,
Laying down my rights (That's a toughie)
Giving up my pride,
For the promise of new life

Those are lovely lyrics. But it's just the words of Surrender. Those are incredibly easy words to recite and sing. But it takes a lifetime of yielding to the Holy Spirit, to make that happen in real time and real life. That's where the... That's where Christianity, hits the road running, isn't it? You can call yourself a Christian, all day long. And thank You Jesus, for dying for me on the cross. But where the rubber really meets the road and where we're really talking about genuine, victorious, Christian living is at the point of surrender. I'm laying down my life.

In these last verses, Jesus warns of a life lived with self at the center. Look at verse 35. He says, *"For whoever would save his life will... (actually end up losing) it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."* Wow! I have a sneaking suspicion I could take this verse and we could talk about it for a year of Sundays and Wednesdays. One verse. I mean, this is just so much.

I don't think any of us here in this room have any trouble with the idea of preserving and saving our lives—to preserve my life. There's an innate sense in all of us that we're born with to protect our lives. We don't... You all know what I'm talking about.

And of course, everything we learn from the world, encourages us to do just—that live for ourselves. Live for yourself. Enjoy life. Make yourself happy. And then they come up with even dumb things like, If you're not happy, you'll never be able to make anybody else happy.

And it's all about, serving yourself. And again, that self-determination and all the things that the world lives for. Because that's all they've got to live for. And it all comes naturally. But this dying to self thing that we're talking about, Oh, merciful heaven, that doesn't come natural. Not even close.

Here's the next miserable Christian. Okay? Is the one who realizes that they need to die to self. And they try to do it on their own. Yeah, that's an exercise in

futility. Let me remind you of one of the most powerful verses in the entire Bible. From Galatians 2:20. But look, I want you to notice what Paul says here.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

I have been crucified with Christ. (in other words, I've taken up that cross, right? And) *It is (now) no longer I who live,* (That was his conclusion.) *but* (it is now) *Christ who lives in me.* (Now this is the part I wanted you to focus on.) *And the life I now live in the* (this body, in this) *flesh,* (I'm living) *...by faith in the Son of God,...*

You see, Paul is saying here in no uncertain terms. That this dying process and the ultimate living process that comes after that—living for Christ—does not happen by your power or my power. It happens by His power. If you're trying to die to self on your own, you're wasting your time. The flesh will not reform the flesh. And the flesh will definitely not kill the flesh. It takes a work of the Spirit. It literally takes... And you say, well, what exactly is that work? I don't know.

What we do... He does the work we surrender. We set our will, you see. That's the point. The point for you and I, is to offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Right? God is going to have to do the work. But we offer ourselves.

We come to Him and say, Lord, I'm not really living. You know why? Because I'm living for me. I want to live for You. And I want to really live. How do I begin to do that? God says, hey, listen, all you do is offer yourselves to Me. You lay it all down. You surrender. It is a setting of the will and an act of faith, whereby, we offer ourselves to Him.

Now Jesus goes on to pose a couple of questions. Verse 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?"*

Obviously rhetorical questions but they're meant to be asked so that you and I might put into perspective what they're talking about.

What they're talking about is, The world has some pretty incredible perks that go along with it. Let's not deny it right now. Okay? Living for self, you ready, is fun and enjoyable. And during the course of this life, it can be pretty stinking fun.

But Jesus is appealing to you and I, to look beyond this life. And He's saying to you and I, but in the end, is it going to be worth it? Because you see, there's more to life than this life. That's the part we forget all the time. And He's pushing us to think beyond the now. And that's, again, something that the world doesn't like to do. But He's forcing us to do it.

And He's forcing us to have a perspective that goes beyond this life, to see life as it really is. And when you begin to take on that perspective, what you have in this life changes. At least... I shouldn't say it that way. Your perception of it changes. And whereby, before Christ, or before you surrender it all, it was something that you worked for, and lived for, and grabbed hold of with all you were worth. Now, after God gives you the perspective of eternity, it's, yeah, really not that important.

Check out what Paul says when he writes to the church at Philippi. Chapter 3:7. He says,

Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV)

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of just knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...

But whatever gain that I had, (in other words, in this world, in this life, He says,) I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, (the fact of the matter is, he says,) I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of just knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (He says,) For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and (in fact, I) count them as rubbish, (So, I'm not sitting and regretting the fact that I've lost them. I consider them as rubbish) in order that I may gain Christ...

See, this is a man who's been transformed by the perspective of eternity as it relates to the things that we live for, in this life, on this earth. And he's come to the conclusion: It doesn't even begin to compare. Now my life is something that, rather than holding on to, I'm going to let go of. And by let letting go of that life, I'm going to gain it. But by hanging on to it, I will ultimately lose it. Right? That's what Jesus is saying. Hey, you going to save your life? That's what the world's doing. My life. I'm going to preserve it for me. It's not for you. It's for me. And if I let You into my life, it's for what I can get out of it. Right?

Yeah, you're going to live your life that way? Money I can make; property I can own; people I can have in my life that will serve me, make me happy. Jesus

says, fine, you want to live your life that way? You'll lose it. Because all you're doing is trying to preserve your life. You're trying to save it. Now you instead give it away to Me and to the gospel? Now you've gained your life. Pretty amazing stuff.

Alright, Jesus ends with a warning in verse 38. He says, *"For whoever is ashamed of me and 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."*

Boy, this one probably hit the disciples right at the heart of where they were thinking. Because all this time, you see, in their mind, the Messiah was a conquering hero. And guess what they are now? They're the closest followers of a conquering hero. You know what that makes them? Cool, socially admirable. Right?

Now Jesus turns the whole thing on its ear and He goes, guys, by the way, I just want to let you know, I'm going to go to Jerusalem here for the last time and they're going to kill Me. In fact, they're going to kill Me in one of the worst ways you can possibly die. The shame of the cross will be Mine. Still want to follow Me? Still want to be associated with Me?

See, that's one of the reasons they would never have worn a cross around their neck. Because it was a symbol of shame. Not just death - shame. You got... Put on a... Shame. And from the Jewish perspective—cursed! Right? It was a curse to be hung on a tree. That's what it says in the Old Testament, cursed is he who is hung on a tree. (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)

So, I'm going to follow this guy who is going to be: rejected by the people, suffer a humiliating death on a cross, stark naked for everybody to see and gawk at, and He is going to be forever considered by religious Jews to be cursed of God. Now you ashamed of Me? Jesus asks, are you ashamed to follow Me? Because see, I'm going to bear shame. I'm going to bear sin. What do you think about following now?

More and more, our American culture sees you and I, in that same shameful light. Probably for different reasons. Not because we necessarily follow someone who they think was shamed in death or whatever. But they think it's a shame that you and I, are so incredibly backwards, so incredibly narrow, and so incredibly intolerant, as to have the nerve to say that, Jesus is the only way to go to heaven.

And if you stand out today as a believer, that probably means you're not going to receive the accolades of the masses. In fact, if you stand out as a believer, what you will receive is their contempt. Because they're not real impressed with you and I. I don't know if you've noticed. Christianity, is not high up on the list of admirable things to be connected with, for various reasons. We are not high on the social ladder at this particular juncture in history.

So, the question that Jesus is asking is, you okay with that? You okay with that? You okay with being, considered scum of the earth? People that just can't get a clue? Let me tell you what Jesus said. This is in John chapter 15. He says, but He says,

John 15:18-19 (ESV)

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

"If the world hates you, (just know this) that it hated me before it hated you. (But you know what?) If you were of the world, (well, then I suppose) the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

And this is something frankly, that every believer ultimately has to come to terms with. Otherwise, you're going to crumble when the world looks very disapprovingly upon your life and upon who you are.

And we need to be able to say, I'm not ashamed of Jesus, even when He's misquoted, even when He is slandered by the people of this world. And it happens quite often that Jesus is misquoted and slandered. And I am not ashamed of His Word, even when it is misquoted, and even when it is slandered by the world.

I'll close here this morning with an exhortation that the apostle Paul, gave to his young protege, Timothy. 2 Timothy 1:8,

2 Timothy 1:8 (ESV)

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God...

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, ... In other words, don't be ashamed to tell people about what God has done in your life. The

testimony of the transformation that has happened in your own life. The transformation of death to life, darkness to light. Don't be ashamed of the testimony of the resurrection. Don't be ashamed of the testimony of God's Word. You believe that story about a big fish swallowing up a guy? Are you stupid? Hey, don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed.

One of my little granddaughters was hearing the story about, Jonah and the big fish. And she said, if we're talking about God, can't He do anything? And that's basically what it comes down to. Right? I mean, if you believe that God is all powerful, what's too tough for Him to accomplish? Right?

So, don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed of the testimony about our LORD. Don't be ashamed of me, Paul says to Timothy. Don't be ashamed even of suffering. Don't be ashamed when you suffer. Because in some way, you probably will suffer something.

Might be a demotion at work. Might be the loss of a friendship. Might be the loss of a marriage partner. Might be the loss of income. Might be the loss of just respect. Who knows? Don't be ashamed when you suffer those things. That's part of what it means to follow Jesus.

And to consider all of those things that the world says, are the reason they get up in the morning, we consider them as rubbish, next to the surpassing greatness of just flat out knowing Jesus, and loving Him, and serving Him, amen.