

Clear Eyes: Seeing Jesus for Who He Really Is

The Way of the Cross

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Mark 8:29–33 ESV

And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

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 be killed, and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Jesus Redefines Victory: Clear sight begins when we embrace Jesus as the Crucified King.

Ephesians 1:15–20 ESV

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened [That you see], that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...

Mark 8:32–34 ESV

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke

him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” 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.

Jesus Redefines Discipleship: The cross is not simply the price of following Jesus—it is the path to the life Jesus offers.

Mark 8:34–38 ESV

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

Jesus Redefines Success: You can gain externally while dying internally.

Mark 16:1–8 ESV

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Small Group Guide: The Way of the Cross

Opening Question

Think of a time you got exactly what you wanted — and it wasn't what you hoped it would be. What did that experience teach you about the gap between what we expect and what we actually need?

Peter Had the Right Answer and the Wrong Picture

Peter's confession in Mark 8 — "You are the Christ" — is the turning point of Mark's entire Gospel. For eight chapters, Mark has been asking who Jesus is. From this point forward, the question shifts to whether we will follow Him. But the confession itself turns out to be only half the story. Peter has the right answer and the wrong picture. Because the moment Jesus begins explaining what kind of Messiah He is — one who will suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise — Peter pulls Him aside and rebukes Him.

The Greek word Mark uses for Peter's rebuke is *epitimaō* — the same verb used throughout the Gospel for Jesus rebuking unclean spirits, a fever, the wind. It is a word of authoritative command. Peter is not just expressing concern. He is assuming a role that only Jesus has occupied. He steps out in front of Jesus and attempts to redirect Him. And Jesus' response is immediate and sharp: "Get behind me, Satan." Not "go away" — "get behind me." The place Peter abandoned when he stepped out front is exactly the place Jesus calls him back to. The place of a disciple is behind Jesus, not in front of Him.

What Peter is resisting is not Jesus Himself. He is resisting Jesus' definition of victory. Every expectation of the Messiah — rooted in centuries of Jewish hope and reinforced by the Malachi 4 imagery of a conquering king — pointed toward triumph, restoration, and visible power. Suffering, rejection, and death did not fit the category. And if that is what the Messiah's path looks like, Peter cannot help but wonder what it means for him. We are not so different. Our prayers reveal the same instinct: remove the hardship, fix the relationship, take away the pain, give me the visible success. Somewhere underneath most of our prayers is a working assumption that blessing looks like comfort and God's favor looks like ease.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 speaks directly to this. He prays that believers would have the eyes of their hearts enlightened — that they would see the

hope they have been called to, the riches of their inheritance, the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward those who believe. The same power, he notes, that raised Jesus from the dead. The point is that our greatest problem is often not our circumstances. It is our vision. We can confess Jesus as Messiah and still define victory the way the world defines it. The cross is what finally corrects that.

When Jesus turns to the crowd and says "take up your cross and follow me," His audience was not hearing a metaphor. In the Roman world, a cross was the empire's most public declaration of absolute power. A condemned man carrying his crossbeam through the streets had already had his verdict rendered. He was not fighting anymore. He had surrendered every claim to his reputation, his future, his life. Jesus takes that image and says: this is what following me looks like. Not enduring inconvenience. Not weathering a hard season. Laying down your right to run your own life and walking behind a king whose path goes through death before glory.

But then comes the reversal that makes this invitation anything other than grim. "Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." What looked like the end of life becomes the doorway into it. And the question Jesus leaves hanging over every human pursuit is the one that exposes the great illusion: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" You can win publicly and lose privately. You can build a platform and hollow out your character. You can accumulate everything the world celebrates and still miss the life God intended. Mark's Gospel ends without resolution — women fleeing an empty tomb in trembling silence — because the question it has been asking all along was never just about the disciples. It is about you. Who do you say He is? And will you follow Him all the way?

For Discussion

1. Peter rebuked Jesus because Jesus' definition of victory didn't match his expectation of what the Messiah would be. Where in your own life have you found yourself resisting not Jesus Himself, but Jesus' definition of what victory or faithfulness looks like in your situation?
2. Jesus told Peter to get behind him — not to go away. The place Peter lost when he stepped out front was exactly the place Jesus called him back to. Is there an area of your life where you have moved out in front

of Jesus, taking the lead rather than following? What would it look like to step back behind Him?

3. The cross is not just the price of following Jesus, but as the pattern of following Jesus — the way through which real life is found. How does that reframe a hardship or surrender you are currently facing or avoiding?