

The Cross Was the Will of God

Mark 8:31-33

Halifax: 2 February 2020 AM

Introduction

Last week, I told you that we have come to a new section in Mark.

- This section runs from Mark 8:31 through 10:52, and in it Jesus talks repeatedly about the cross as He goes to Jerusalem with His disciples to be crucified.
- I will have more to say about that after we have our scripture reading.

The scripture reading is from Mark 8:31-33.

- Listen carefully as I read it to you. It is God's Word.

Mark 8:31-33: And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But

when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

May the LORD add His blessing to the reading and now to the preaching of His holy word.

I. Here Jesus begins to tell His disciples about what He must do as the Christ.

A. Notice how it says that He *began* to teach them at this time.

- He had not done this yet because they were not ready to bear it.
1. Up until now, He had preached about the kingdom and had done many miracles.
 - As we have seen, to our great delight, He has shown us that He is our Saviour who provides for us.
 - Twice, He has fed multitudes of thousands, He has cast out a legion of demons, He has raised a girl from the dead, He has healed a deaf man with a speech impediment, He has given sight to a blind man, He has calmed the waves of the sea, and He has walked on the water. He has healed hordes and hordes of people who have flocked to Him with their needs.
 - Over and over, He has shown us that He is the One who has authority to save us from the curse.
 - Surely, everyone but the most hardened would delight to see such a One who has come into the world to deliver us!
 - Wherever He went, He was sought out.
 2. Just recently, we reached a milestone in Mark where Jesus' disciples, the twelve, have finally confessed that He is the Christ.
 - While initially they had thought that, they were confused because He had not taken a more prominent place among the people.

- He was not conducting Himself as a great king... in fact, the leaders of the people had little use for Him and He Himself had resisted popular attempts to make Him king.
- Recently, we saw how Jesus had rebuked the twelve for their blindness and hardness of heart.
 - It was high time that they recognised Him as their Messiah after all that they had seen and all that they had heard.
 - And in Mark 8:27-30, the passage before the one we are looking at today, He had asked them directly who they thought He was.
 - And they had rightly declared that He was the Christ.
 - They recognised that He was the Messiah that God had promised, the Son of David who would take David's throne and reign forever.
 - Jesus affirmed that He was the Christ, telling them sternly not to tell anyone.
 - At this point, it would be more confusing than helpful because even the disciples, as we shall see, have no idea what Christ is called to do at this juncture.
- And now that they have finally confessed that He is the Christ,
- 3. He begins to tell them what the Christ must do.
 - All the gospels show this turning point in His teaching, but Mark emphasises it more than any of the other evangelists.
 - From this point on to the end of chapter 10, Jesus repeatedly tells His disciples what He must do as Messiah and what they must do as His disciples.
 - We have Him in these chapters *on the way* to Jerusalem for the last time.
 - He speaks about *the way* that He is going and *the way* that they must go even as He *makes His way* with them to His appointed task.
- B. He lays out the shocking facts of what He must do.
 - You can see them in verse 31.
 - 1. First, He says that He, the Son of Man, must suffer many things.
 - This is not at all what they expected of the one who was the Messiah and had shown them clearly that He had power to raise the dead and calm the raging sea. Who could make Him suffer? He was the King Messiah!
 - 2. Next, He says that He must be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes.
 - This is a reference to the three great classes that made up the Sanhedrin—the highest court of the Jews.
 - *The elders* were the lay leaders—ruling elders who were part of the highest church courts.
 - *The chief priests* were the high priest himself, the former high priests, and the leaders of the twenty-four courses. They were the most influential and were mostly Sadducees (rationalists with wealth and political connections).

- *The scribes* were the official theologians—the interpreters of the law. They were mostly Pharisees who mingled tradition with scripture.
 - Jesus’ rejection by the Sanhedrin was even more shocking.
 - This was not just rejection by individuals or a lynching by a mob.
 - This was to be the conclusion of highest court of the Jewish church after deliberation... an official verdict of the highest court of the church!
3. Jesus even says that He will be killed.
- The common understanding of the Jews at this time was that the Messiah would be the one doing the killing!
 - He would be like David of whom it had been said, “Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands,” though He would bring world peace and reign in righteousness.
 - The Son of David was to be greater than David and He was to live forever, reigning on the throne of David over the whole world.
 - The Targum at about this time interpreted passages about the servant who was to be cut off in Isaiah 53 as speaking of the sufferings of the people and the positive statements of the Messiah.
- Suffering, official rejection, and death—these were not at all compatible with Jewish expectations of the Messiah.
- Yet, Jesus says that He must do these things.
4. He adds, however, that after three days He will rise again.
- Jesus does not leave out the fact that death will not be the end of Him... that He will personally rise from the grave after only three days.
 - This would have brought encouragement to the disciples and made what Jesus said more acceptable if they could have accepted that He would die.
 - But they could not, because His death seemed utterly pointless and out of accord with their expectations about His kingdom.
- More about that in a moment, but first, I want you to notice something.
- C. Jesus presents all of this as a divine plan.
1. The word “*must*” makes this clear.
- Do you see it in verse 31?
 - **And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer...** and so on.
 - He is not merely predicting the future here.
 - He is talking about what He must do as the Messiah.
 - He is telling them what He is now setting out to do—what the mission of the Son of Man involves.
 - He is laying out what is required of Him as the Messiah, as revealed in the Old Testament—places like Daniel 9:26, Isaiah 53, and Psalm 16 & 22.
2. It is noted that He spoke this openly—plainly.

- This was not a parable—this was concrete and clear.
- That made it all the more troubling to His disciples.
- He presents this plan not only as *an* essential part, but as *the* essential part, the very essence of His saving work as the Messiah.

TRANS> The Son of Man who had come to save His people, the promised Messiah, the one who preached with authority, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead—He had come to suffer, to be officially rejected, killed, and then to rise on the third day.

II. This plan is incompatible with human reason.

A. Peter therefore rebukes Him.

- You can see that in verse 32...
 1. Then Peter took Him aside...
 - It is as if he is embarrassed about what Jesus has said...
 - The way you might call a child aside who was constantly picking his nose at the table—you pull him away to have a little chat... so as not to draw too much attention to the matter and cause more embarrassment.
 2. It says that Peter “began to rebuke Him.”
 - Think of it—Peter, who has just confessed Him to be the Messiah, now takes it upon himself to rebuke Him.
 - A rebuke is not an inquiry, it is not even a gentle correction—a rebuke is a charge of wrongdoing. We are told that we are not to rebuke an elder.
 - J.C. Ryle notes the strange mixture here of grace and infirmity which may be found in the heart of a true Christian...
 - Here was ignorance—Peter would have prevented Jesus’ death on the cross that was the way of our salvation.
 - Here was self-conceit—Peter thought he knew better than his Master.
 - And here were the best intentions—a man may mean well and fall into tremendous mistakes.
 - Peter was sure that Jesus had erred.
 - Suffering, official rejection, death—these were not the work of the Messiah! He was supposed to deliver His people from such things.
 3. Peter speaks for us all... before we have been taught better by the Holy Spirit.
 - All people would pretty much agree that man needs to be saved.
 - All would agree that if there is God who wishes to help us,
 - He needs to come to deliver the good people from the bad people (or at least set the bad ones straight) so the good people can get on with their lives.
 - He needs to eradicate all kinds of illness, lift the world from poverty, fix the climate so that we have no storms...

- And yes, He needs to do something about our social problems too—to bring reform so that we can get along better and be happy.
- Human wisdom tells us that this is what is needed from God—not for God to come here and be rejected by us and die on a cross.
 - What good would *that* do?

B. But look! Jesus rebukes Peter.

- Verse 33 says: **But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”**

1. His rebuke is very strong.

a. “Get behind Me...”

- This is not just a call to return to his place as His follower—“Go back to following Me as your Master.”
- The words “behind me” can mean that, but the word “get (up-a-ge)” means “depart” or “withdraw.”
- This is the same language that Jesus used when He confronted the devil at His temptation in the wilderness.

b. Jesus actually calls Peter “Satan”—the arch enemy of mankind—

- *Satan*—the proud angel who initiated rebellion in heaven against God and who drew us into rebellion on earth...
- *Satan*—the one who told us that it would be better for us to eat the fruit that God told us not to eat... to show God that He cannot tell us what to do... that we will make our own decisions about what is best.
- There is no other example before this of Jesus calling anyone Satan.

c. The point is not that Satan is speaking through Peter’s vocal cords.

- The point is that Peter is thinking the same way that Satan thinks, Satan, whose temptation involved telling Jesus that the cross was not necessary...
 - telling Him that He could save the world without bothering about the cross.
 - “You have all authority and power. You can do this in a different way than the way the Father wants. You are capable. You don’t need the Father to tell you what to do. His way is despicable.”

2. Unlike Peter, Jesus makes sure that all hear this rebuke.

a. Did you notice that?

- Peter took Him aside to rebuke Him privately, **But when He [Jesus] had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter.**
- Jesus wanted to make sure that they all heard this rebuke because He knew that they were all thinking the same thing.
 - Peter is good because he often puts in words what others are afraid to say.

- b. We need to make sure that we are part of the audience as well.
 - We need to hear this rebuke too because we still struggle with the cross.
- Look at the rest of what Jesus says.
- C. Jesus identifies the problem: God is not in our thoughts.
 - **v. 33: ... for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.**
 - 1. That is the way we are in our fallen condition.
 - We don't think about God who made the world; God who knows all things, God who is the judge of all people. We miss His perspective.
 - We don't cherish what He cherishes.
 - As the old version says, **“Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”**
 - Our natural way of thinking, being fallen, is not compatible with the God of truth and righteousness.
 - 2. It is quite clear in our own unsanctified minds what God needs to do for us.
 - If there is an all-powerful God out there who cares, then He needs to use His power to fix our world.
 - We don't need Him dying on crosses—we need Him to end our poverty and our suffering.
 - We need Him to clean up our environment and to clean up our cities and to give us peace... to deal with our drug problems and our wars.
 - 3. I bet you will remember the reference I made to Donald Grey Barnhouse, back when we were in Mark 2, about what would happen if Satan took over.
 - Barnhouse, the minister of Tenth Presbyterian in Philadelphia from 1927 to 1960 asked the question, “What would Philadelphia look like if Satan entirely took over?”
 - The bars would all be closed, the people would all be together in nice friendly neighbourhoods... and they would all go to church on Sunday... but the gospel would not be preached.
 - Satan loves to have traditionalists who go to church every Sunday and who say their prayers and read their Bibles—but don't know the Lord.
 - Or maybe they are enthusiasts who are always talking about how the Lord did this and did that in their lives, how He helps them make it through the day, and how close they felt to Him in worship, but who not see that they are sinners who need a Saviour to atone for their sins.
 - Their thought is, “We don't need a cross, we just need to get along—we just need to love each other and to be delivered from our problems.”
 - That is the thinking of men and not of God.
 - According to Jesus, to think like men is to think like Satan.

III. See then, that you learn to glory in the cross.

- A. The cross is what the Messiah had to do as the Messiah of those who ate the forbidden fruit.
1. We are full of sin and guilt because we rejected God as our God.
 - This is more reprehensible than gouging out the eyes or children for sport, torturing innocent people, or setting fire to all our cities.
 - To eat the forbidden fruit was the setting out of the human race to do what we want whenever what God commands does not suit us.
 - It is because of that choice, with which we are all complicit, that the Lord has justly sent us all the problems that we have in the world.
 - Many of them are our own making (such as when we mistreat each other) but many of them are straight from the hand of God (like droughts and hurricanes and the spread of diseases like we have witnessed this week).
 - Our rebellion has made us reprehensible to God and justly deserving of all this curse and death and everlasting punishment...
 - What else are they worthy of who have rejected their Maker?
 - The thoughts of man are that forbidden fruit is but a little thing... but our thoughts in this are not God's thoughts.
 2. Our situation is desperate because we have no way to rectify the wrong that we have done to our Creator.
 - We have set ourselves against Him.
 - We are guilty, and His holy justice demands eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire, and the penalty must be met.
 - If the penalty of sin is not met, then it leaves divine justice unsatisfied—it leaves the lie that rejecting God is but a little thing to stand... the very lie that we embraced when we fell and still embrace as we live in this world.
 - Indeed, if we saw rebellion for what it really is, we would cease to sin—eating the forbidden fruit would be reprehensible to us.
 - So the penalty must be met for our sin—the lie that what we did is acceptable must not be allowed to stand lest our glorious God be dishonoured.
 - Love to our glorious God demands that the penalty of our injustice be paid, either by us or by another.
 - But we have no way to pay this penalty... we must suffer it for eternity for justice to be done.
 3. This being so, our Messiah must be a Messiah who suffers, who is officially rejected, who dies, and who is raised again.
 - That is what He must do to be the Messiah of those who ate the forbidden fruit.
 - He must do this to bear the penalty for human sin.
 - If He does not, we are eternally ruined—forever under the wrath and curse of God.

- If Jesus were the Messiah of a people that fell on hard times (which God would never have allowed if we had not sinned—but if it were so),
 - then there would be no need for Him to suffer and be rejected and die and rise again.
 - He could have just come and healed us and all would be well.
 - He could have done what the world is sure needs to be done and what Peter was sure of and what we all think until our eyes are opened by divine grace.
 - That is the world’s solution, but God’s solution is His Son on the cross.
- B. Let me ask you all, have you accepted the Messiah crucified and raised for sin?
1. Has God opened your eyes to see that we need—and that you need—such a Messiah?
 - It is not natural for us to think this way.
 - Peter and the other disciples did not think this way.
 - Nobody thought this way until it was revealed to them by God.
 - They had seen that He was the Messiah—how could they deny it?—
 - But they did not see that to be our Messiah He must go to the cross.
 2. But now that this has been revealed in redemptive history, you need to see it to come to Jesus.
 - If you come to Him as a Messiah who died essentially because bad men unjustly arrested Him, sentenced Him, and delivered Him up to be crucified,
 - You have not really come to Him.
 - He is not a Messiah that fell into the hands of wicked men.
 - He is a Messiah that God the Father **sent** to be crucified—a Messiah that came to bear the sins of those who ate the forbidden fruit.
 - Acts 4:27-28 says it perfectly: **For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.**
 - Your claim that He is your Messiah is false unless you have come to Him as the One who was called to be punished for His people’s sins.
 - Your claim is false unless you have come to Him that your sins might be pardoned by His blood that was shed—by His bearing of your penalty.
 3. It is a grand thing if you have come to Him for this—you will glory in Him as crucified and raised for our justification forever!
 - It will give you true peace now and forever more.
 - Here is the true remedy from heaven!
- C. And if you have embraced the cross, now it is for you to learn to glory in it more and more as long as you live.

1. Oh yes, it is an offensive thing!
 - It is not at all a flattering thing for us—just the opposite—
 - It takes time and effort to learn to glory in it more and more.
 2. Here is something to help you... have daily communion with Christ crucified.
 - a. To do this, first look upon your sins as God sees them... confess them... that is what it means to confess your sins... to see them as God does.
 - Don't deny them or brush them off.
 - See them before Him as a holy God.
 - See the root of them in our rebellion as those who ate the forbidden fruit.
 - Consider the penalty of them.
 - b. Then, consider what Jesus has done.
 - Look with gladness on Him as the Messiah who came to suffer and die because of His great love for us.
 - See the pains that He bore for you, bearing for us all the pains of hell.
 - Hear afresh His call, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden." He is a welcoming Saviour, full of warmth and tenderness.
 - Know how it honours Him and how much He loves to have you come to Him to be forgiven and restored.
 - c. And then turn your eyes from self-promotion to the promotion of our Messiah!
 - Self-promotion is so discouraging because it is based on a lie that we are something when we are nothing.
 - I meet people all the time who have been taught to believe in themselves and that they need to forgive themselves and to have more self-esteem—and these people are all so miserable.
 - But when we turn to promote Jesus Christ the Messiah who went to the cross!
 - I say, then we have something to glory in.
 - There is nothing to glory in about you—sure, you are fearfully and wonderfully made and you have gifts and abilities that God has given you—but you ruined all these by your rebellion against God.
 - It is broken glory—that you ruined by your wickedness!
 - But there is much to glory in about Christ—the Saviour who loved God the Father, the Saviour who is the Son of God, the Saviour who suffered and was officially rejected and who died and rose again!
 - To glory in Him is life!
 - Have communion with Him as the one who takes your sin and who gives you His righteousness.
 - Grow in that communion day after day.
- Don't think like men, don't think like Satan—

- Savour the things of God.
- Delight in this crucified Saviour.
- It was God's will for Him to be crucified.