

KNOW, LOVE AND SERVE JESUS

January 28, 2018 | Pastor Randy Remington

This is the fourth and final part of our Sunday morning sermon series; "Know, Love and Serve Jesus". Our lead pastors did not want to begin the year with resolutions or something similar, but to clarify our mission and calling as a local fellowship.

This week we peek into a conversation Jesus had with his disciples and followers. If a person, a messiah, a leader wanted to add to his/her following they wouldn't take this approach. But, as we shall see these challenging words hit right to the heart of being a disciple.

Randy told the story of sitting in a car in a parking lot, talking to a young lady named Sandy who he had been dating for several months. Sandy basically asked him, "where is this relationship going"? Like most couples getting to know each other, it had been fun dating each other, they had things in common, but as Randy calls it they had come to the "defining relationship moment". This was not a person pushing the other to something they didn't want, but a defining of that relationship.

That relationship changed because of the commitment he made from that conversation. Jesus has come to that moment with those he had walked with; let's read about that defining relationship moment:

Mark 8:31-38, "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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 concerns of God, but merely human concerns." 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

The conversation between Jesus and Peter is fascinating. Jesus will address many things, but initially he is saying, you really don't know what God is up to. He talked about the things that "must take place".

As we read, we will see that Jesus is calling them to a radical commitment; a defining relationship moment. For many of us we really didn't know what this entailed, what it fully meant, but make no mistake his disciples and followers are at a crossroads. They were thinking that Jesus didn't turn out to be the type of messiah they thought he would be...suffering, rejection and even death, what?

Jesus is telling Peter, you're acting like a consumer; he was calling them to a radical commitment. This commitment would not come out of guilt or fear of going to hell or "missing the rapture". Actually, if you think about it, Jesus came to set us free from guilt and fear. Neither was this commitment to come from an atmosphere of enthusiasm or excitement. He is calling them to deny themselves and really follow him.

These are confrontational words; words that challenge all of us into something deeper. Bringing this to our culture in the 21st century, Jesus isn't like Facebook, where we "follow" him and "like" the things we enjoy.

Jesus is clearly saying, if you follow me it will lead to a cross. He is not promising them/us a pain-free life, but he is promising life that we couldn't have obtained any other way.

Mark 8:34, "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

"Whoever", this is an open invitation, but you **must** deny yourselves...he is setting a very high bar.

A Disciple is someone who is with, learns from and becomes like what his or her teacher does.

1. **DESIRE: "WHOEVER WANTS"**

Do you want to follow me, be my disciple? The response to a love that he initiated.

2. **DENIAL: "MUST DENY THEMSELVES"**

The word "denial" is used twice in scripture, here and when Peter is confronted by a servant girl at the trial of Jesus. Peter denied Jesus; he was saying; "I'm not with him, I'm not following him." Jesus is challenging us to "deny ourselves."

3. **DEATH: "AND TAKE UP THEIR CROSS"**

For us today, the cross is a symbol of victory; for the readers of that time, it was a thing of shame. They had seen people die this brutal death; it was painful, horrific and humiliating. A Roman citizen could not be put to death on the cross.

"To be crucified means, first, the man on the cross is facing only one direction; second, he is not going back; and third, he has no further plans of his own."

- A. W. Tozer

Jesus is saying I want you to be my friend, but they might reject you and prosecute you, are you in 100%?

Mark 8:35-36, "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

THE CRUCIFORM LIFE: I am shaped by my commitment to Jesus, formed by the cross.

"You have to give to receive. You have to surrender to something outside yourself to gain the strength within yourself. You have to conquer your desires to get what you crave. Success leads to the greatest failure, which is pride. Failure leads to the greatest success, which is humility and learning. In order to fulfill yourself you have to forget yourself. In order to find yourself you have to lose yourself. That inverse logic is the moral logic. There is no other."

- David Brooks: "How to Be Religious in the Public Square"

"Your real, new self will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for Him. Does that sound strange? The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fiber on your being, and you will find eternal life."

- C.S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity"

"Commitments form our character and shape our identity"

"A commitment is falling in love with something and then building a structure of behavior around it for those moments when love falters."

Mark 8:37-38, "Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Let's look at that verse this way:

Mark 8:38, "If anyone honors me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation—by denying yourselves, taking up your cross and following me—the Son of Man will honor you when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Randy shared about a talk he and Sandy experienced early in their lives, he called it; “defining relationship moment”. What does this phrase mean to you and have you ever experienced this with a person or maybe even with God?
2. As you read our passage in Mark 8, thinking about the culture and setting of that time, what do you believe his disciples and followers were thinking as Jesus talked. Briefly describe what you see Jesus calling them to.
3. Please discuss in detail what Jesus meant by; “Desire”, “Denial” and “Death”?
4. There are two quotes from David Brooks and C.S. Lewis. Read them carefully and what do they say about what we’re discussing this week?
5. This lesson is about surrendering and committing to his plan and Lordship. It was stated: “Commitments form our character and shape our identity”. Now think about the relationships you have committed to, including Jesus and what does this quote say to you; “A commitment is falling in love with something and then building a structure of behavior around it for those moments when love falters.”?