

THE CALL TO GLORY

I. Greetings:

II. Introduction:

Note: Last week we spoke of the key aspect of Jesus' life. Let me refresh your memory. >>>> Read to the audience Mark 8:31.

Q Did Peter like it? Why not?

Q How many of you know people who do not like certain things about the Christian faith and as a result stay away? Raise your hands if you know such people.

Q Are there things about Christianity that you do not like? Can one or two of you share, like Peter did, some things you either do not like now or did not like before?

An = In Peter's case, he was against the cross and the rejection Jesus said He would suffer. Peter really loved Jesus. He might have had other selfish reasons, but he also did not want to lose the Person he loved most in this world. However, Peter might have had another motivation. What would happen to Jesus could happen to Peter. Our lesson for today will show us what Jesus' suffering, rejection, death and rising again would mean for His disciples.

III. The Call: Mark 8:34.

>>>> Have someone read Mark 8:34.

Q What did this mean? What does it mean to you?

An = Maybe even have someone take notes or write on a board their answers.

Note: Let me add or repeat a few of your ideas in different words.

1) Notice the word "if". Jesus did not compel, but asked. A person must freely choose.

2) Notice Jesus was honest - He challenged the disciples with the fact that following Him would entail death; He did not deceive them, but spoke the truth of the terrible cost of being like Him.

3) Notice verbal confession was not enough. Remember Peter was willing to say Jesus was the Messiah (see Mark 8:29), but Jesus said there was much more involved.

4) Notice, we are to come after Him, He asks nothing He Himself did not do.

Note: William Barclay reminds us in this regard that there was a famous Roman general, Quintus Fabius Cunctator, who was discussing with his staff how to take a difficult position. Someone suggested a certain course of action to capture it, "It will only cost the lives of a few men," this counselor said. Fabius looked at him, "Are you," he said, "willing to be one of the few?" Jesus was not the kind of leader who sat safely in a remote position from the heat of the battle and played with the lives of men like expendable pawns (Barclay, p. 207).

Q All of us would agree that Jesus was fair, but would we also agree that this sounds too hard?

An = 1) God could have prevented His men from suffering any trials. They could have always been sheltered from difficulty and pain, but He allowed them to have the "glory of participation". 2) The cost involved forced them to shift the center of gravity from self to reckless abandonment to God. 3) The faith Jesus spoke of was real only when what Jesus spoke about in 8:34 was actually acted out in their lives. It could not remain in their minds. 4) We only value what costs us something.

Note: There is a mystery of hiddenness?

An = They were to become the great ones of heaven, but such greatness was to be hidden from most people now on earth. Jesus was Almighty God, yet He was asked to suffer pain, death and rejection. Few people figured out that Jesus was suffering for them!

Note: I think if we are honest we would agree that it seems hard to pay such great costs to follow God without a lot of praise and acclaim from others.

Q Who did Jesus allow to hear such strong demands? Who was allowed to know the real truth?

An = Notice Jesus called the crowd to himself along with the disciples. Everybody was allowed to hear what He had to say. Jesus lets all hear such a call, and all heard what such a call entailed. He was not like a cult leader who hides part of their agenda from the public. Jesus did not misrepresent the call to gain followers.

Q What were the three conditions?

An = 1) One must deny oneself.

What would happen if every mother refused to take the risk of bearing a child? What would happen if men spent all they had upon themselves and did not help their families? The very essence of life is in risking and spending it, not in storing and hoarding it. True, it is the way of weariness, of exhaustion, of giving to the uttermost--but it is better to burn out than to rust out. Oddly, denying oneself is the way to happiness and the way to God.

The disciples were being told that unless they denied a part of their lives, they could not follow Him.

Q Here is a difficult question: could the disciples be happy if they did so?

An = I have struggled long with this question. However, the second condition clearly states...

2) One must take up one's cross. One must be prepared to sacrifice and that sacrifice will be painful at times.

3) The disciples were to follow Him.

Q Was self-denial the goal?

An = No, the goal was to follow Him, not just deny oneself. It was not just trials, but trials for Him, not just dying, but obeying His commands. The goal was not to suffer, but to add His virtues, to follow Him, to be like Him. Some for the sake of religious pride will suffer, but it takes love and humility to follow as well.

IV. The Reasons for the Call: Mark 8:35-37.

>>>> Have someone read Mark 8:35-37.

Q What do most people fear? Is it Death, or losing something we value?

An = Let them give their answers without comment.

Note: Notice the reasons He gave for denying, taking their cross, and following Him. He issued a Threat (35 a), a Promise (35 b); and then He followed with two rhetorical questions (36, 37).

Q What was the threat in the first half of 8:35?

An = If you try and save your life you will lose it anyway.

Q What was the promise in the last half of 8:35?

An = Jesus promised that if one would risk their life for His and the Gospel's sake they would save their life. The whole promise centers on loyalty to Jesus Himself. Jesus said: "Be loyal to me and you will

win!"

Note: Jesus then asked two very searching questions. He asked these questions because He wanted them to think out why they were to accept such a challenge.

Q Could the disciples gain the world's approval and still be loyal to Jesus?

Note: Jesus' call was very risky. I have noticed that those who really give all to Christ are those who really live, and not just in the life to come, but in this life.

V. Choosing What to Fear: Mark 8:38-9:1.

>>>> Have someone read Mark 8:38-9:1

Q What was the threat in 8:38?

An = If they denied Jesus, then He would deny them. They could not live a hidden Christian life in this world and expect Jesus to publicly acknowledge them in the life to come. That would not happen.

Q What was the promise in 9:1?

An = The "now" set the future. They had to display loyalty, loyalty to His future glory. Death in this life was not to scare them. To see His glory was to lose the fear of death on this side of the grave and to live in His glory and His absolute freedom from death in the future.

Note: There are many interpretations on what Jesus means concerning some will not taste death until they see His glory. Let me give you just one. If we are willing to follow Jesus, and die to ourselves, then we will see, on this side of the grave, the glory of His Kingdom, the glory of His Person.

Q Why did Jesus say "some" who are standing here will see the Kingdom of God come with power?

An = Not all were going to see it. Maybe the experience of the Christian life is anything but one of power in most Christian's lives. The reason could be they have yet to really follow Jesus.

Note #1: Often the issue is tied to forgiveness. Maybe there are people in the lives of most Christians that it would kill them to forgive. To go ahead and die in that way could be the beginning of truly living. It is the beginning of seeing the kingdom of God come with power.

Note #2: Often the issue is one of judging others. Some Christians put some people down and despise and gossip about others. Those who do that are not following Jesus (see Matthew 7:1-5). Maybe it would kill them not to gossip or despise that person?

But I have heard some say: "I have to gossip! Someone has to spread the news!!!! All justice in the world will collapse if I did not gossip and put that person down."

What will really collapse is their own soul if they continue.

Until they stop, they will be dead.

Note: Jesus' words seem so hard tonight, but the Apostle Paul understood them and believed the same truths. Let us close with some of his words....

>>>> Have someone read Romans 12:1, 2