**The Gospel of Mark Sermon #6**

**Lessons on Discipleship**

Comments about Covid-19:

Joshua 1:6-7 Be strong and courageous, but do not be foolish! (as some Christians have been in the name of being committed)

Hebrews 3:12-13 See to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today.

Colossians 4:5-6 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Now our sermon

Theme of Mark:

Jesus: Messiah and Son of God: suffering servant and savior of mankind.

Theme verse: Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

We have seen Jesus as the suffering servant.

We have seen Jesus as a kind of superhero, traveling around, healing people.

We have seen Jesus who has power over nature (calmed the storm).

We have seen Jesus as one who has power over the spiritual/demon world.

Mark 8:22-26 Jesus heals a blind man.

It is curious that he is only partially healed at first…

Does this mean that Jesus is not sufficiently powerful?

No. Look at the next section to get the point!

Mark 8:27-38 But then look at the next story, where the disciples can also only partially see. After much struggle (for example in Mark 8:14-21 when they do not even get that Jesus can feed 4000 “Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes that fail to see, and ears that fail to hear?), they now “see” that Jesus is the Messiah.

Peter: Ahhhhh… Now I get it. You are the Messiah, [the Son of the living God] (Matthew).

But they are still partially “blind” to the fact that he must suffer (as they must suffer)

Jesus predicts his death three times! Mark 8:31-33, Mark 9:30-31 (they still were like the blind man… they did not understand), Mark 10:32-34 the most clear yet. (again, we see here the theme of Mark. Jesus the suffering servant and Savior of mankind)

Are you like Peter? Are you trying to make Christianity a thing which does not include suffering? A thing that has a Messiah, but not a Lord. Are you counseling people to avoid hard situations so that they will not be hurt? (this is a matter of balance, is it not?)

Many people are fired up about Jesus as Savior, but are “blind” to the cost of discipleship—hardship and suffering. They don’t get it. What about you?

Mark 8:34-38 (parallel to the more well-used Luke 9:23-27)

Put yourself in their sandals: What image came into their minds when they thought about crosses?

Q: Have you ever made the decision to deny yourself and take up your cross?

Q: Have you made a decision this week to deny yourself and take up your cross?

v. 36-37 Q: What are some of the things that people give in exchange for their souls?

Esau: a bowl of lentil stew.

People I have known: A more prestigious job. A boyfriend. A moment of pleasure. “Success” for your children.

v. 38 Have you been ashamed of his word? (ex: me hiding my Bible)

Mark 9:1 One of them (Judas) would not see the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

Skipping the Transfiguration (will cover later) and the Boy possessed by an evil spirit.

Mark 9:38-41 Don’t stop them. If they are not against us, they are for us.

But what about Matthew 12:30-32

Mark 9 is about a person who calls him/herself a Christian (but probably is not actually saved), and is doing good in Jesus name. Do not challenge them, but encourage then. (I would go so far as to day the same thing about a Muslim or a Hindu or an atheist who is serving people, although they do not do it in Jesus’ name)

Matthew 12 is about a person who opposes Christianity—who denies Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of mankind. They say they are not against Jesus. Such a person is not neutral on Jesus. To not agree with Christianity is to oppose the truth and to oppose Jesus.

There is no middle, neutral ground with regard to Jesus. Those who do not accept him for who he says he is are opposing him. (but still… do not rebuke them if they are doing good things!)

Mark 9:42-50 Jesus gets radical here! But Jesus is using hyperbole.

Q: Would it literally be better to have a millstone tied around your neck and be thrown into the sea than to cause a young Christian or child to stumble?

OK, can you think of a better idea? Does Jesus intend we do this?

Q: Would it literally be better to have a hand or a foot cut off than to use it to sin, leading you to hell for eternity?

OK, can you think of a better alternative? Does Jesus want anyone to do this?

Q: Would it literally be better to pluck your own eye out with a knife or spoon than to look at pornography or another impure thing, to sin to the point that you would lose your salvation?

OK, can you think of a better alternative? Should we have a bunch of one-eyed Christians walking around?

Will there literally be worms eating our bodies and fire burning our bodies in hell?

The message: We need to be REALLY radical in our own lives and in each other’s

 lives when it comes to sin!

Mark 9:50 Salt is a preservative. It prevents spoilage.

“Have salt among yourselves.” He is talking about being in each other’s lives and, as a faith community, helping one another overcome sin.

Summary:

Let us decide today to take Jesus, not only as Savior, but also as Lord and let us go with him to the cross.

Let us make a decision to pick up the cross every single day, even as we are stuck in our homes.

Let us help one another together to deal with sin, and cut it off by whatever means we can (short of gouging out one another’s eyes). Let us be salt to one another.