**The Gospel of Mark Sermon #7**

**The Cost of Discipleship**

Comments on Coronavirus:

The late first-century bishop, Clement of Rome wrote, “Let the presbyters [elders] be compassionate and merciful to everyone—bringing back those who wander, visiting all the sick, and not neglecting the widow, the orphan, or the poor.” The second-century Greek apologist, Aristides, wrote that Christians “do not turn away their care from widows, and they deliver the orphan from anyone who treats him harshly.” The second-century Christian work *Shepherd of Hermas*noted, “Therefore, instead of lands, buy afflicted souls, according as each one is able. And visit widows and orphans.”

A good example of incomparable Christian behavior and its effects on pagans is provided by the events surrounding the great plague which struck Egypt in the 250s. Eusebius tells us, quoting from Dionysius of Alexandria[[1]](#footnote-1) that “most of our brethren, by their exceeding great love and brotherly affection, not sparing themselves, and adhering to one another, were constantly superintending the sick, ministering to their wants without fear and without cessation, and healing them in Christ, have departed most sweetly with them.” He reports that elders and deacons joined in the work; many sacrificing their lives in order to care for the sick, both among the Christians and the pagans. They risked their lives to give a decent burial to all alike. “Among the heathen it was the direct reverse. They both repelled those who began to be sick, and avoided their dearest friends. They would cast them out into the roads half dead, or throw them when dead without burial.” Although many Christians died in this manner, in the long run the church in Alexandria actually grew faster than before, both because the disciples had a greater survival rate because of the care received and because of the wonderful example of the Christian lifestyle to the heathen.

The first hospitals in the world were Christian churches.

In the first three centuries, especially in Greek cultures, pagans would expose special-needs children to the elements.

Christians would find them, adopt them and raise them in their homes.

In the second century we have record of bishops telling their members to stop spending so much money freeing slaves and helping those in prison because they were impoverishing themselves.

Julian the Apostate:

Julian “the apostate.” (332-363) Reviving pagan religion

“Atheism (i.e. Christian faith) has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of

the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.”

Let us find ways to imitate their lives here in Bakersfield today.

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.

We have seen Jesus explaining and demonstrating discipleship

[Mark 10:1-12 Teaching on divorce.

Q: What is the lesson for us?

1. God does and always has hated divorce. (Malachi 2:16 For I hate divorce NASV ) Marriage is about having one flesh! Don’t even think about it!!!! I have known of men (and women?) who almost hope that their spouse will give them an excuse to end the marriage.

2. More importantly, he is rebuking their attitude. Their attitude is this: What is permitted by God?

Wrong question: What is God’s desire and will?

Q: Do you ask what is permitted/allowed?

-dating

-finances

-gambling, drinking, etc….]

Mark 10:13-16 Jesus and children.

In the ancient world (including, unfortunately the Jews, the man was king, wives were second class citizens and chidren were third or fourth class citizens...

Q: Why does the kingdom of God belong to those like children?

Child-like, not childish.

In the Near Eastern context, probably Jesus is not so much referring to the positive qualities of children (humility, willingness to trust, teachability), but to their low status. We need to adopt the attitude of littleness (Phil 2:4f) God works powerfully through our weakness, not through our strength.

The Rich Young Ruler

“Good Teacher” Probably this man thought of himself as good. His question is something like this: How can I turn my goodness to advantage in the afterlife? Any hints in case I am missing something small?

No one is good except God alone. Jesus: Do you know what you are saying? An enigmatic statement. Is Jesus claiming to be good? Is he claiming to be God?

Illustration: The man who told me, as he neared death, that he was the best person he had known.

v. 19-20 Keep the commandments and you will have life!

The man: Well, I guess I am good to go! Is he being arrogant: Apparently not, because looked at him and loved him.

Because he loves him, Jesus tells him, not what he wants to hear, but what he needs to hear.

Being in the top 1% is not good enough!!! Q: Do you really understand that?

Jesus: Go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor. Q: Are we to take Jesus literally here? What about my car?

Ex: Zachaeus. Why did Jesus not ask him to go and sell all he had.

Q: What do you value more than God? God wants you to give that thing up, literally!!!

Result: He counted the cost and was not willing to pay it!

v. 23 How hard it is…

Us: Yeah! You tell those rich people!

The apostles were shocked, because they assumed rich people are closer to heaven than poor. (Prov 10:22) If it hard for them, then what about me…

Jesus dropped a bombshell here, almost as great as his statement that he would suffer and die!

Q: What about you. All of us know intellectually (and by experience?) that money does not buy happiness, but is there a part of which still clings on to the desire for more money—we still want more….

v. 24 Dear children. Affection, but also, how much do children desire money? How wise they are in this area!

How hard is it to enter heaven by our own righteous deeds? Like a camel (the largest animal in the Near East) going through the eye of a needle. Ie. impossible!!!!

Note: Preachers have always tried to downplay this statement. There is the famous illustration about the “Camel’s Gate” in Jerusalem, which was low enough that you had to unpack your camel to get through the gate. There is one problem with this illustration. It is not true. It was invented by a preacher who wanted to soften this statement by Jesus.

So: What must you do? Nothing you do. Only God can do this. Do you get this?

We cannot buy our way into the kingdom. We only enter it by submitting fully to the king.

Peter: Feeling like he cannot make it. He has given up everything. He has made Jesus Lord.

You will receive 100-fold. Q: Quantity or quality?

Mark 10:35-45 and John make a request

Jesus: We have just a teensy little favor to ask.

We would not be so bold, but are we like them?

Remember Mark 8:27-33 They are still thinking that Jesus’ role as Messiah will lead them to glorification, not to suffering and death. They think of his ability to calm the storm and to defeat demons as evidence that he is a kind of superhero. They are SO wrong. They are still half-blind.

Q: What about you? Is your Jesus one who brings victory or is he a suffering servant? Are you a suffering servant?

Luke 17:10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.”

Matthew 25:23 Well done, good and faithful servant.

Quote from Genesis Targum on p. 326 of Mark Commentary.

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.

This is discipleship, folks. To walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 22,1-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)