

The Gospel According to Mark - Is It Worth The Trade?

Is It Worth The Trade?

Mark 8:35-38

"I cast my mind to Calvary where Jesus bled and died for me, I see His wounds, His hands His feet. My Savior on that cursed tree!" We had a young man years ago who came to our youth group when we were first starting our church and he asked me this: "Pastor Larry, when are you guys going to get off this Jesus kick?" I told him we would never get off the Jesus kick because that's what we were all about! Why? Because of what we just sang..."I cast my mind to Calvary where Jesus bled and died for me!" Folks the world is going to constantly batter us and attempt to get us to get off the Jesus kick! They are going to try to get us to leave the divinely inspired principles of God's Word, but we must hold fast, we must not compromise the truth. Jesus gives us some very compelling reasons for holding on to the truth. Let's pray and we'll look at those reasons as we look at three statements and two questions. Pray!

Our text is found in Mark 8:35-38. Let's turn there and see what Jesus had to say. And we're going to include the one verse with five principles from last week because it sets the stage for what Jesus says next...

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Mark 8:36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

In this passage, Jesus makes three statements and ask two questions that will help us find the answer to our sermon title,

Is It Worth The Trade?

So let's look at Jesus'...

Three Statements and Two Questions

First Statement

Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it...

What did Jesus mean by this? I believe He was describing people who are so focused on achieving worldly success, acquiring social position, accumulating material wealth, and attaining pleasure, they simply miss real life, real purpose, real meaning, real relationships, and real satisfaction! As I said last week, we typically think we know what is best, however, God's Word is very clear that we don't!!!

Prov 16:25 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Isa 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

Isa 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

And then this very sobering word from Romans 1:22-

Rom 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Rom 1:22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Rom 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Rom 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Rom 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

What is insanity?

“Doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results.”

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, who wrote the Boundaries books, said this...

“If it didn't get you the results you wanted the first three or four . . .or ten or twenty times, why do you think it will give you your answer this time?”

God Said in Jeremiah 18:11...

Jer 18:11 . . .So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions . . .

The People Said in Jeremiah 18:12...

Jer 18:12 ... 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.'"

We think we know what would make us happy! This is known as the...

“If Only” disease!

“If Only I had a different relationship”

“If Only I didn't have to deal with the difficult people at work”

“If Only I didn't have these health issues”

“If Only I had more money”

“If Only I had a better job”

“If Only I had better opportunities”

“If Only I lived in a nicer house”

Prov 23:4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.

Prov 23:5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

“Some folks get to the end of their life only to find that they spent their whole life in pursuit of things they thought would make them happy, but did not. Not only did these things not bring lasting happiness, but they will leave these things behind, every single one of them. Itm

And what about this “If Only”?

“If Only I lived somewhere else”

Do you know what the problem with this one is?

“You are where you are even if you are somewhere else!”

That's just good old country boy wisdom. If the problem is you then you take your problems with you! Now I realize there are some situations people are in that are just plain bad and things could be better if they were in a different situation, but a huge percentage of the time, the problem is attitude, outlook, priorities and lack of spiritual focus. One of our church members posted something yesterday on Facebook and I thought, “that goes along with what I'm preaching tomorrow!” Here's the post...

“A negative mind will never give you a positive life!”

So it's not as much circumstances as it is the way you decide to handle those circumstances. And I know sometimes the circumstances are horrible, but we have a God who is greater than any circumstance! So if you find yourself in a bad situation trust God to be there with you right in the middle of the circumstance and then with His strength, “bloom where you're planted!” Remember this: storms in life never catch God by surprise! So if God has allowed you to be planted in a tough place, ask Him to give you the strength to bloom where you're planted and if wants to transplant you somewhere else He will. That doesn't mean you

don't try to change your bad circumstances or take actions to better your situation, but it does mean that you trust God where you are, and live God's principles where you are, and find the joy of The Lord in your present circumstances while you wait for God to do His part to get you to a better place! You might discover that an attitude of faith and trust in God Almighty may change your circumstances or cause you to find such great purpose in the middle of your circumstances that you get excited to see how God is going to make all things work together for your good. But sadly, some folks spend a lifetime chasing better circumstances never realizing it's the presence of God and the peace of God that make any circumstance tolerable and purposeful! This leads us to the...

Second Statement

Mark 8:35 . . . but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

When a person loosens their grip on what they think is really life and allows the grip the world has on them to be broken, Christ can show them life that is really life!

1 Tim 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

1 Tim 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

1 Tim 6:19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Dr. Cloud and Dr. Townsend weigh in again...

"Fortunately, in God's economy, getting to the end of ourselves is the beginning of hope. Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in Spirit.' (Matthew 5:3)--meaning that when we realize we have no more resources, we're ready to ask God for help. The very great news is that when we ask God for help, we have instantly transcended our own limitations. We have stepped over to the side of a God who has infinite ways to grace us with all the resources we really need."

Paul gave this testimony of what we're talking about...

Phil 4:12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Phil 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

And do you know who was the greatest example of all times of losing life to save life? Paul tells us in back in chapter 2 of Philippians...

Phil 2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

Phil 2:2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Phil 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Phil 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

Phil 2:7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Phil 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!

Phil 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

Phil 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Phil 2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What an example of losing one's life for the gospel and yet saving it. Jesus gave up His life, but in return He won salvation for all who would believe in Him and accept His grace and mercy. And look what God the Father gave back to Him! He rose again, and was exalted to the highest place and given the name that is above every name! When Jesus made these statements to the disciples, He must have been thinking about the example He was going to set for them on the cross and then He asked this...

First Question

Mark 8:36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

What a perfect question to go along with our sermon title! Is it worth the trade? If you could become the richest man or woman on the planet and have everything you ever wanted in this life, but lost your very soul in the trade, would it be worth it? Jesus asked...

Mark 8:36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

What is the soul? The word soul in the Old Testament is the word nephesh and in the New Testament Greek it is the word psuchē. The words spirit and soul are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the spiritual aspect of a man. Spirit in the Hebrew was the word rurach and in the New Testament Greek pneuma. However, while the Bible sometimes refers to various aspects of a person as mind, body, soul, spirit, or heart, the Bible is not dividing up a person into separate independent parts. The biblical view of a person is more holistic and so you see this in many versions translated like this...

Mark 8:36 (GNT) Do you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life?

So here's the bottom line: You could gain the whole world, but if you trade your integrity, your honesty, your spiritual walk with God, your compassion for others, your love for family, your conscience, your heart, your soul, then you lose your life! Your spirit becomes sickened and begins to die! Some would say, well, that's okay, because I lived it up in this life and enjoyed myself so it doesn't really matter. I once saw a bumper sticker that said...

"He who dies with the most toys wins!"

If there is only this life and nothing after this life you could be right sort of, although I would rather live my life with less toys and maintain my love for God and my love for family and my love for others and know that I lived for others and not just for my self! It's not wrong to own toys, I have a few, but it's tragic when your toys become your gods! And let's just say, for argument sake, there is a life after this life, of course I know there is, but I'm talking to those who might think otherwise, let's just say there is an eternity and decisions you make in this life really do matter. What then? Jesus told this story in Luke's Gospel...

Luke 16:19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.

Luke 16:20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores

Luke 16:21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

Luke 16:22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.

Luke 16:23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

Luke 16:24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

Luke 16:25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'

Luke 16:26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

Luke 16:27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house,

Luke 16:28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Luke 16:29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

Luke 16:30 "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

Luke 16:31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Two things: When a person is consumed with the things of the world they are mesmerized, spellbound, addicted, ensnared, enslaved and blinded by the lies, and the deception! For some, even a miracle of someone coming back from the dead to warn them would not be enough to loosen the grip Satan has on their soul! The writer of Proverbs said this...

Prov 5:22 The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast.

Prov 5:23 He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

Which may lead some of you to ask is there any hope?

Second Question

Mark 8:37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

What an interesting question. What can a man give in exchange for his soul? Can you live with reckless abandon, reject Christ and His gracious offer of love and forgiveness and then just buy your way into heaven? The Psalmist had something to say about this in the Old Testament...

Psa 49:7 No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him--

Psa 49:8 the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough--

Psa 49:9 that he should live on forever and not see decay.

Psa 49:10 For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others.

Psa 49:16 Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases;

Psa 49:17 for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.

Psa 49:18 Though while he lived he counted himself blessed-- and men praise you when you prosper--

Psa 49:19 he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life.

Is there any hope for the wealthy?

Psa 49:20 A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish.

So notice, it's not wrong to have riches, but if you have riches without understanding, without an eye, an ear, a heart and a mind for the things of God, the spiritual things, the things of the soul, the heart things that matter the most, then you perish, you loose your soul, your life, the things that matter the most. This is not just about loosing life in eternity but about loosing real life here and now! And this is not just an issue for the wealthy! You see the Bible doesn't say that money is the root of all evil, but...

1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

It says some people eager for money have wandered from the faith! So nobody can point a finger at anybody else. This is an issue for the poor, the wealthy and the middle class!

Jesus explains this further in Matthew 19...

Mat 19:23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 19:24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Mat 19:25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Mat 19:26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

So there is hope! But there's nothing that you could exchange for your soul.

There's no bargaining, there is only repentance.

There's no amount of money that could be paid, there is only the precious blood of Christ that was paid on your behalf!

I love the way Matthew Henry summed up these verses back in the 1600's...

"We must not dread the loss of our lives, provided it be in the cause of Christ; Whosoever will save his life, by declining Christ, and refusing to come to him...he shall lose it, shall lose the comfort of his natural life, the root and fountain of his spiritual life, and all his hopes of eternal life; such a bad bargain will he make for himself. But whosoever shall lose his life, shall be truly willing to lose it, shall venture it, shall lay it down when he cannot keep it without denying Christ, he shall save it, he shall be an unspeakable gainer; for the loss of his life shall be made up to him in a better life."

Matthew Henry then quoted a Bishop Hooper...

"True it is," said Bishop Hooper, the night before he suffered martyrdom, "that life is sweet, and death is bitter, but eternal death is more bitter, and eternal life is more sweet." As the happiness of heaven with Christ, is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world in sin, is not sufficient to countervail the ruin of the soul by sin."

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

Okay, the last statement. The hard thing about preaching through a Book of the Bible verse by verse is that you can't skip the hard parts...

Third Statement

Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Simply Stated...

In this life we are given many opportunities to receive the gracious offer of friendship with God through Christ, as well as eternal life. If we refuse and reject the gift offered, we alone are responsible for the consequences suffered. None-the-less, God's heart is broken.

Ezek 33:11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

Is it worth the trade? Depends on which trade you make.

Those who have gained the world but lost their soul will say emphatically, "No, it's not worth the trade! I made a really bad deal! Worst decision I ever made!"

Those who have lost the world but gained a personal relationship with Christ will say emphatically, "Is it worth the trade? It's the best decision I ever made! I traded in my sin, my filth, my lostness, my hopelessness and gained a Savior, a Guide, a dear Friend, eternal life, and a joy in this life that nothing or no one can take away!"

Let's pray!