

“True Discipleship”  
Mark 8:34-38  
(Preached at Trinity, April 11, 2012)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last week we saw Peter in a great moment of spiritual weakness. In **Verse 31** we saw Jesus teaching His disciples of His work as our Redeemer. As Peter heard these words his heart was crushed. This could never be. How can the Messiah suffer and be put to death. Upon hearing this Peter began to rebuke Him.  
ἐπιτιμάω - chide, rebuke, reprove, censure severely
2. Jesus, however, knew the actual source of Peter's words. They were straight from the lips of Satan.  
“Get behind Me, Satan” – It was Satan, once again, seeking to overthrow the work of our Savior, and he was using one of our Lord's own disciples to do it!
3. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells Peter, "You are a stumbling block to Me"  
σκάνδαλον – a stumbling block, a trap or a snare – any person or thing by which one is (entrapped) drawn into error or sin. We get our word scandal from this word.  
**Matthew 18:7 NAS** - "Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!"  
The rock of verses 16-18 had become the stone of offense.
4. And then to top off His rebuke, Jesus accuses Peter of having a greater regard for carnal things than for spiritual things.  
**Mark 8:33 NAU** - "for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."
  - A. Peter was allowing himself to be tempted by Satan into accepting man's foolish carnal perspective.  
**1 Corinthians 1:18 KJV** - "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."
  - B. He didn't realize that he was actually asking for his own eternal damnation for if Jesus did not go to the cross every man would perish in his sin.
  - C. Thank God Peter did not remain in this state but became a mighty preacher of the cross he is here trying to dismiss. This is a testimony of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.
5. At this point beginning with **Verses 34** Jesus takes this opportunity to describe the demands of discipleship. He turns His attention from His disciples to the crowd in general. The Gospel is offered to all men, but the demands of the Gospel are unchanging. William Hendriksen – By doing justice to the verb tenses in the original:  
“If anyone wishes to be counted as an adherent of mine, he must once and for all say farewell to self, decisively accept pain, shame, and persecution for my sake and in my cause, and must then follow and keep on following me as my disciple.”
6. Tonight I want to set before you the demands of true discipleship—what it means to be a Christian.

- I. There must be a desire - **Mark 8:34 NAS** - "If anyone wishes to come after Me"
- A. Jesus speaks of a strong desire
1. The word is θέλω
  2. This desire is more than a mere interest. It is an all consuming passion
- B. The Rich Young Ruler had an interest but no passion  
**Mark 10:21-22 NAU** - "Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." <sup>22</sup> But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property."  
It demands a passionate pursuit  
**Matthew 11:12 NAS** - "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."
- II. This interest in Christ must exceed our love of self - "He must deny himself"
- A. Self-centeredness is the mark of a lost man – it defines his nature
1. He does all things for his own self-interests
  2. Every decision, goal, opportunity is measured on a balance scale – he will always choose that which magnifies his own self-interests
  3. If he becomes religious he will seldom allow himself to be inconvenienced.
  4. He will always be adverse to authority
- B. Self-denial is the greatest result of regeneration – it runs contrary to our nature
1. We deny all self-sufficiency trusting only in the merits of Christ  
**Galatians 2:20 NAU** - "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."  
    - a. We now have a mystical union with Christ
    - b. We have died, yet we live – yet it is not us who live but Christ in us. We live in the flesh but not after the flesh
  2. We have once and for all said farewell to self—our self-interests, in favor of the things of God - This was Peter's great danger in **Verse 33**  
**Mark 8:33 NAU** - "for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."
- C. What does this look like?
1. Dying to self means a willingness to part with all of our wealth, our prestige, our influence, our family, even our life.
  2. Jesus may not require these things of you but you must be willing to forsake whatever He demands and follow Him
  3. Luther: "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also"

- III. “and take up his cross” - This is a picture of a man sentenced to die by crucifixion.  
It was the prevailing custom for him to carry his cross to the place of execution
- A. For the man coming to Christ it signifies a full and complete identification with the sufferings of our Savior  
**Philippians 3:10-11 NAU** - "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."
1. Jesus endured the painful and shameful death of the cross
    - a. Painful because of the cruelties of the cross – suffocation, the torture of being nailed, the sufferings from the beatings and scourging
    - b. Shameful because He was naked  
Shameful because He became sin for us
    - c. He was crushed under the wrath of God – the penalty upon our sin
  2. Yet he did it willingly for us and the glory of the Father  
**Hebrews 12:2 NAU** - "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
- B. What does this mean for us?
1. We must be willing to live a life complete submission to the will of God  
**Philippians 2:8 NAU** - "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
  2. We must be willing to endure the pain and hardship of discipleship
    - a. To experience the discomforts that Christian work may bring – the heat of walking door-to-door. Personal inconvenience. You can't even get most professing Christians today to show up.
    - b. To be willing to suffer physically for the sake of the Gospel
    - c. To be willing to give up personal comforts
      - (1) living with less to do more for the kingdom
      - (2) being willing to go where ever He might lead you  
Would you be willing to sell your home?  
Would you be willing to leave family, friends, to go on the mission field?
  3. We must be willing to suffer shame for Christ  
Rejection, ridicule, hatred, A loss of worldly prestige
- C. Note:
1. It should be noted that applying this passage to the ordinary difficulties of life such as arthritis, hearing loss, or unruly children is not a proper exegesis of the passage, although it is true that Christianity affects how we endure all things for His glory.
  2. Jesus' hearers would not have heard these words and applied them to some metaphorical meaning. They had seen crucifixions! Following Christ demands a sober commitment with no turning back.

IV. “And follow me” – Following Christ means obeying His commands without reservation, without hesitation, without question. No man may set conditions on following Christ. An unwilling mind will always make excuse.

A. Notice Jesus says, "If anyone wishes to come after Me"

1. It means with Jesus in the lead and our eyes upon Him we follow. It means we attach ourselves to Him.
2. The disciple must be willing to leave all and follow.  
“Follow” - ἀκολουθέω

**John 10:27 NAU** - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"

- Peter and Andrew  
**Matthew 4:19-20 NAU** - "And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."
- James and John  
**Matthew 4:22 NAU** - "Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him."  
Matthew
- **Matthew 9:9 NAU** - "As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him."

B. How is this applied to us?

1. We too must forsake all and follow hard after Christ  
ἀκολουθέω – present infinitive – follow and keep on following
2. No excuse will suffice  
**Matthew 8:21-22 NAU** - "Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." <sup>22</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."
3. Many today use their family as a convenient means of excusing themselves from duty  
It should be noted that most of the disciples had families – wives, children  
But they followed
4. Jesus spoke clearly on the demands of discipleship—no wealth, no comfort, nothing stands in the way.  
**Matthew 8:19-20 NAU** - "Then a scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." <sup>20</sup> Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."  
**Luke 14:26-27 NAU** - "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. <sup>27</sup> "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."  
**Mark 8:34-35 NAU** - "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

Conclusion:

1. Sadly, most people think the demand is too great. They are not willing to give themselves up to Christ.
2. The result of such a decision is dreadful  
**Mark 8:35 NAU** - "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."
3. It is one of the great paradoxes. To lose your life is to save it. It is to enter into life abundant. To gain your life is to lose everything.  
**Mark 8:38 NAU** - "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."