

Mark Chapter 8 v 31-33

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Date: 13 March 2016

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[0 : 00] And Jesus asks him three questions. So it's John chapter 21 verses 15. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again Jesus said, Simon son of John, do you love me? He answered, yes, Lord.

You know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon son of John, do you love me? Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me?

He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep. How highly the Lord Jesus counts our love. Like Peter's, it's an imperfect love, failing.

A love which lets him down and ourselves down. But it's the one thing that Jesus ultimately longs for and desires from our lives. The question as we come this morning, this evening to worship again is, do I love Jesus? Do I love him? Because if we love him, then we can't out but worship him, praise him and serve him. Let's see. One of the verses we sang there tells us that he is the one who hears and answers prayer. Let's come to the Lord in prayer together. Let's come as we do from time to time in a time of open prayer. If I pray briefly, as many as feel able, lead us in prayer, lead us in thanksgiving, lead us in worship, lead us into that place of seeking God's face and seeking his blessing upon us now. So let each of us pray as we are able. We thank you again, our gracious and loving Heavenly

Father, that we are those who are in your care. We are those who are safe in your arms. We are those, O Lord, who are carried upon the shoulders of the Good Shepherd. We are those, O Lord, who you will never let go and who have nothing to fear. We thank you that you are our God and that you are our Saviour.

[2 : 28] And we thank you again that we are yours and nothing in heaven and earth and hell can ever separate us from you. Rather, we ask, O Lord, that just as we know that we are one with you, may we know and sense and feel your presence amongst us. May we know what it is to be with you this evening and to dwell in your presence. May we be like those of old who sat at your feet, of Peter who walked by your side.

May we also know the sweetness of your nearness. May we see something more of your loveliness, Lord Jesus, we ask. Amen. Gospel of Mark. Gospel of Mark. And chapter 8.

Mark and chapter 8. If you've got the New Church Bible, that's page 1012.

We're going to begin reading from verse 27. We're going to actually have three readings from the Gospel of Mark. And none of them are particularly long, but you'll see why we're reading these particular passages. So Mark chapter 8, beginning at verse 27, reading through to verse 33. And then I'll tell you where we go from there. Here is the Word of God.

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way, he asked them, who do people say I am? They replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others one of the prophets. What about you? He asked, who do you say I am?

[4 : 23] Peter answered, you are the Messiah. Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

He spoke plainly about this and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.

Get behind me, Satan, he said. You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. Over to chapter 9 of the Gospel of Mark and verse 30.

So Mark 9 verse 30. They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were because he was teaching his disciples.

He said to them, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him and after three days he will rise. But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

[5 : 39] They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, what were you arguing about on the road? But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve and said, anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all. He took a little child and he placed among them.

Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me. Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me.

Then thirdly, over into chapter 10 of Mark and verse 32. Mark chapter 10 verse 32.

They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him.

[6 : 44] We're going to Jerusalem, he said, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him.

Three days later, he will rise. If you would like to have Mark and chapter 8 open in your Bibles, we read there just a little while ago from Mark chapter 8 and 9 and 10.

Well, it's pretty obvious that we've reached that time of year again. The signs all around us are very plain to see.

The shelves of the supermarket are fully stocked with all sorts of chocolate. Chocolate eggs, chocolate bunnies, chocolate chicks, just about chocolate everything.

The stationary shops have walls dedicated to greeting cards to send friends and relatives our greetings and blessings. We are fast approaching Easter.

[7 : 54] In fact, amazingly, it's only a fortnight today and it's crept up on us again, hasn't it? The countdown has begun to Easter and the world is preparing for it.

By sending cards, by buying chocolate, by decorating cakes, in all sorts of ways the world is preparing for Easter, planning holidays, breaks, visits to relatives and so on.

The question is this, how should we prepare for Easter? How should we who believe that the events of Easter are the most momentous events, the most earth-shaking days in the whole of human history, how are we to prepare for Easter?

Jesus himself was very keen to prepare his disciples for Easter. That's why I read, as I did from Mark's Gospel, where on three occasions in the space of just three chapters, Jesus predicts his death, predicts his suffering, announces what must take place on that first Easter.

And as we prepare ourselves for yet another Easter, it would be very helpful for us to consider the preparations that Jesus made for his disciples to prepare us. Think about it.

[9 : 17] Three times Jesus says this. Three times Mark records the occasion of Jesus predicting his own death and suffering. Now we know that Mark's Gospel is the shortest Gospel by a long way.

We know that he was someone who was very much to the point, his punchy style. Mark wasn't somebody to waste ink and paper. So clearly there's something important in the repetition of Jesus' words.

Not only do these three separate occasions give us great evidence for the reliability of the Gospel, we believe that indeed Mark's account is something which was narrated to him, given to him by the Apostle Peter.

Why include three events if each one is different? Mark is faithfully reporting what Peter has told him. He's not skimping.

He recognizes that these things were true. They actually happened and for that reason they need to be included. Jesus says it three times because he wants his disciples to grasp something which is so vital, but something which they failed to understand on almost every occasion.

[10 : 30] You see it there. Firstly with Peter rebuking Jesus. Secondly, we're told in chapter 9, verse 32, they did not understand what he meant, were afraid to ask him.

And even there in chapter 10, verse 32, those who followed him were afraid. He takes them aside. But again, they don't understand.

We didn't read the remainder of that section, but then James and John ask for a place and a position of authority in his kingdom. They never grasped, they never understood what Jesus was really saying.

And each time Jesus speaks, as we've seen, the circumstances are different. So I want us to begin by looking at this very first episode, this event in Mark 8, verses 31 and surrounding.

And that's important, isn't it? Whenever we come to Jesus' words, whenever we come to any portion of Scripture, it's important we read around that passage. It's important that we don't just take a verse out of context, but we understand and grasp something of the situation.

[11:37] Mark gives us quite a bit of instruction as to what's going on and what's happening. Back in verse 27, we're told that Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi.

So we have a geographical location to when Jesus spoke these things. It wasn't in the temple in Jerusalem, it wasn't in somebody's house in Capernaum, or in Nazareth, or around Galilee. It was here in Caesarea Philippi, way north. Way north of Jerusalem, as far from Jerusalem as you could get, and still remain in the country.

Jesus was a long way, as it were, from civilization. But more significant, of course, is the fact that Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection immediately follows Peter's confession of him as the Messiah, as the Christ.

And we know, of course, in Matthew's account of this same event, Peter goes more than that. He says, you're the Son of the living God, the Messiah and the Christ. But here, Mark keeps it to the word Messiah.

[12:45] Peter's words draw from Jesus, in this occasion, a warning. Verse 30, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. He didn't want the news spreading.

Already, we know that he was a celebrity figure. Already, people were coming to him for all sorts of reasons. Already, he'd stirred up the anger and the displeasure of the chief priests and the religious leaders.

Jesus, at this time, was not ready to be revealed as the Messiah and the Christ, so he warns them. But also, from his words, he not only warns them to be quiet, but he then tells them what it is the Messiah has come to do.

Explains to them who the Messiah is. Their concept of Messiahship was muddled, at the least.

Jesus prophesied that he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, that he must be killed and after three days, rise again.

And Peter, no doubt, jubilant at the fact that he has been given this great privilege, that he's given the right answer for the first time. You know what it's like when you were at school and the teacher asks you a question and you put your hand up and you've got it right.

[14:01] Wow. I mean, you know, it's quite a surprise, well it was to me anyway, to get the question right. And so you suddenly feel like you can answer any question the teacher throws at you. You suddenly feel like, you know, you know, I've got it right.

And so the teacher asks you another question, you put your hand up, but if he asks you, you don't know it. You're flummoxed. And here's Peter. He's built up, in one sense. He's emboldened now to protect Jesus, he thinks.

To protect him from himself, to protect him from these gloomy thoughts of his death. Gloomy thoughts of his suffering and at the hands of the teacher of the Lord.

No, this isn't right. He takes Jesus aside and he rebukes him. Perhaps Peter has in mind that desire to reassure Jesus.

No, it's going to be okay. No, no, no, it's not going to be like that. You're the Messiah. You're the servant of God. You're his promised king. It's going to be okay. In one sense, perhaps his intentions were well founded.

[15:00] I'm sure they were in many ways. But whatever his motivation, Jesus rounds on him and responds to him with words that he surely didn't expect at all. Get behind me, Satan.

You do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns. Why is Jesus so severe with him? Why is Jesus so harsh with Peter? He's, right, he was a bumbler and a fisherman and a bit clumsy and so on but he was well, he was big hearted, wasn't he?

The only time that Jesus actually uses a similar phrase to this is of course when he was in the desert for 40 days and nights when he faced the onslaught of Satan himself as he resisted those temptations on three occasions.

They're found particularly, specifically in Matthew but also in Mark and Luke as well. And it's the third of the temptations that Satan brings to Jesus that receives that same rebuke, get away from me, Satan.

Get away from me, Satan. What was it that made that third temptation so deserving of his rebuke? What was it that Satan had suggested or sought to present before Jesus to test his will that he took such an exception to?

[16 : 22] The other two temptations he's clear, he refers to the word of God, he speaks of the word and says, man shall not live by bread alone and you must not put the Lord your God to the test.

But here he personalizes his words and says, get away from me, Satan. As he says in one sense literally to Peter, get behind me, Satan. Why did Jesus drive him away?

Well that third temptation that Satan dangled before the Lord Jesus is here. Let's listen to it. It's in Matthew in chapter 4.

Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all their splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me.

Luke records even more fully the words of Satan and the temptation that he brings where he tells us that Satan was willing to give Christ the authority and the glory of the kingdoms of the world if he would only worship him.

[17 : 28] Now of course not only was the whole thought and concept of worshiping Satan obnoxious to the Lord Jesus but there's something more as well. The thought was in one sense that Jesus could rule over the hearts of men and women in the world without first having to go by the cross.

He could have the authority and the power over people and have them worship him and bow to him and follow him without going through the suffering of Calvary.

Satan literally was offering a way out, an opportunity to get glory without cost. And Peter's words echoed that same temptation as he also tried to turn Jesus away from the sufferings to come.

Unwittingly Peter acted as an agent of the devil by thinking like a sinful man, a selfish man instead of viewing these things as being from God's perspective.

whenever we act, whenever we speak, whenever we are driven by selfish intent, dear friends, we are thinking Satan's way rather than God's way.

[18 : 48] We are following in the devil's footsteps rather than doing what God would have us to do. It's a serious thing, isn't it? Sin is not some trifle.

Selfishness is not just some simple human bent. It is the very heart of men and women following the heart of Satan. So here Jesus rebukes Peter because there before him was being placed the opportunity or the temptation or the idea that the cross was not necessary.

That the cross could be avoided, that a ring road could be driven around all of that pain, all of that anguish, all of that horror which Jesus clearly knew and understood full well even here months before Gethsemane.

But you see Jesus' words which Peter heard but didn't grasp are the words that we need to hear as we prepare again for Easter. Listen to them once more.

Verse 31 of Mark 8 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

[20 : 11] When we read the other predictions, the second and the third prediction, there's no use of the word must. Jesus said he's going to, this will happen but here he is specific on two occasions saying he must suffer, he must be killed.

We need to grasp dear friends as we think of Easter the absolute necessity of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. To understand Easter properly as the momentous event that it is in the shaping of history and the changing of the world, we've got to say that it was vital.

Jesus knew very well that's what his disciples needed to understand. The thing that they didn't understand, the things that they weren't prepared for was the necessity, the vitality, the mustness of Jesus' suffering.

Why did Jesus know that? Why did Jesus say that? Because of course he knew what Peter didn't know. Peter had in mind the thoughts or the concerns of himself, human thoughts and concerns but the Lord Jesus Christ had in his mind the thoughts and concerns of God and the necessity of the cross was this, that it was the fulfilment of the will of God.

It was the fulfilment of what God wanted, what God wished, what God desired. The very reason that he came from heaven, took on our humanity and entered into this world was that he might fulfil the very will of God, his father.

[21 : 40] He made that plain to his disciples as well in the gospel of John in chapter 6. He says, for I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.

Jesus was sent at the father's command. Jesus often in the gospel of John spoke about him who sent me, the one who sent me, the father who sent me. It was God's will that he should come into this world.

It was God's will that he should be the saviour and the Messiah. But what was it that God had willed, what was it that God had planned for him? That he must suffer, that he must be killed. wonderfully, on the day of Pentecost, those months later on when the Spirit of God came and brought understanding to Peter and the other disciples, Peter was able to stand before all the thousands who thronged there and crowded that Jerusalem marketplace and he was able to say in Acts chapter 2 verse 23, this man, speaking of Jesus, was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan, and foreknowledge and you were the help of wicked men put into death by nailing him to the cross.

Later on as Peter writes in his first letter, we've been thinking about that in the past weeks and months, he assured the believers there to whom he's writing that Christ's death was as the Lamb of God, that it was God's will that he should suffer, it was in God's heart that he should die even before God had created the world.

[23 : 18] 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 20, you've been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect, chosen before the creation of the world, but revealed in these last times for your sake.

Peter understood then what God's perspective of Easter was, he understood then the necessity of the Son of Man, the Son of God suffering and dying because it was God's will.

Isn't that wonderful that the very actions and works of sinful men cannot overthrow the will of God but will ultimately fulfill his will.

Do we see the cross of the Lord Jesus as absolutely necessary? Do we understand it that there the very will of God was accomplished?

The greatest act of injustice and inhumanity that the world has viewed was actually the very will and plan and desire of God.

[24 : 25] Jesus knew that. Do we see things from God's perspective or from our own? Do we look at our own lives perhaps and we see difficulties and trials and struggles and we cry out and say, God, how can this be your will?

we may even see the wicked actions of sinful men and women around the world carrying out atrocities and cry out, Lord, where are you in all of this?

What are you doing? Let us be assured that the very actions and acts of wicked and evil men and women cannot overturn the will of God, cannot throw his plans out of kilter, cannot stop him from accomplishing what he has determined.

Yes, he is deplored by those things. Yes, he hates iniquity and sin. Yes, he will bring justice and judgment upon those who break his laws and who carry out atrocities but, ultimately, gloriously, his will must be done.

In your life and mine as well, we can trust him. Do we see things? Do we see the world? Do we see life in God's perspective or do we simply have in mind the things of man?

[25 : 47] How did Jesus know that it was God's will that he must suffer and die? How did he know that the Messiah had to be killed and rejected by the elders and chief priests?

How did he know that? How did he know that it was essential? How did he know that it was vital? He knew it because of course Easter was the fulfillment of God's word. Easter is the fulfillment of God's will as God has revealed it in his word.

The Old Testament spoke of and foretold that the Christ would suffer, that the Christ would die. Many places in many different images we have this truth being declared.

Go right the way back to the Garden of Eden. As soon as sin enters into the world, God comes and speaks a word of promise. As he rebukes the devil who worked and gave himself in the guise of a serpent, so God says to him, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers.

He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. Even then they were assured that God would send through the offspring of Eve one who would crush the head of Satan.

[27 : 04] and he would do it through the bruising of his self, through the suffering in his body. Was that not the reason why Satan worked so hard to turn Jesus aside from the cross?

Was that not why he put and sowed the seed of thought into the mind of Peter? Because he knew full well that at the cross his end was imminent?

Jesus going to the cross was to fulfill the word of God.

So we find throughout the scriptures we find these constant promises and pictures of the one and only Son of God, the Messiah, his King, suffering.

We see Abraham on the mountain holding over his son a knife to sacrifice him on the altar, his one and only Son. Picturing and foretelling the coming of Christ.

[28 : 04] We hear David speaking of the sufferings he endured in Psalm 22 foretelling crucifixion. They pierced my hands and my feet before crucifixion had even been invented.

We hear Isaiah describing the servant of the Lord, the one who would come to fulfill the will of God being pierced for our transgressions over and over and over again.

God's word speaks that the Son of God must suffer and be killed. And Jesus rebukes Peter in one sense.

He's not only turning himself back onto the course of the cross but he's upholding the word of God. If Peter was right and Jesus should not go to the cross then surely the word of God would be proved to be false.

God himself would be proved to be a liar, unreliable, untrustworthy. He must suffer these things because God had said he must suffer these things and will suffer these things.

[29 : 13] There's one more thing of course isn't there? Well many more things I'm sure that we could think of why Jesus said that he must suffer and he must be killed. Why it was so necessary, so vital for him to go to the cross.

Not only that God's will might be fulfilled, not only that God's word might be fulfilled, but rather that God's work might be fulfilled. The very work of God was what Jesus came to do.

God had promised throughout his word that the Messiah would come to fulfill God's work. What was God's work? To save his people from their sins. So Jesus declares as he speaks later in chapter 10 and verse 45 in that, a bit later on from that passage where he spoke about his own suffering, he says this, 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 was the work of God that Jesus came to do, not to be served but to serve. That's why he was called the servant of the Lord. God's. How on earth could sinful men and women like us ever be made right with God?

How could it be possible that God's just judgment could be upheld but sinners pardoned and forgiven? How could the holy God ever be reconciled and made at peace with lawbreakers and rebels who turned against him?

[30 : 48] There's only one way, only one possible way by which that could be done. If one person was willing to suffer the punishment for the sins of the multitude, if only one person was willing to take upon themselves the judgment of God, but where could you find such a person whose life would be of equal worth to millions of people?

Where can you find one person who not only is willing but who is valuable enough that his death could be representative of the deaths of many millions?

Only one who was and is both man and God. Only the Son of Man, only the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ must suffer because that is the only way for forgiveness.

As the writer in Hebrews chapter 9 verse 22 tells us, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Without the shedding of the blood of the Son of God, we could never be forgiven. There was no other way for us to be saved. There was no other way for us to be delivered. There was no other way for us to be brought out of darkness into light, brought out of death into life.

[32 : 04] Surely if there could have been any other possible way for you and I to be saved, wouldn't God have gone that way? Wouldn't he have spared his own son if he could?

Wouldn't he have held back the suffering that he put him through? If there was some other way by which our works or by religion or by good deeds or by some other thing, we could be right with God. No, there could not be any other way. There can be no other way except that the Son of God must suffer and must be killed.

Is that how we see Easter? Is that how we view the cross? Is that how we see the Lord Jesus Christ as he hangs there, bloody and torn?

We see him as the one who did for us what must be done, who accomplished for us what we could never do for ourselves. Do we see him as the one who suffered to deliver us from suffering, who died to rescue us from death?

[33 : 09] Do we have in mind the things of God or the things of men? Only if we see it from God's perspective will Friday be Good Friday. Only when we see that there our sins were taken by him who did not deserve to have our sins will we see the wonder and the delight of forgiveness.

Only then will we count sin an awful thing because it took our Savior to the cross. Only then will we see that obedience to God's will is our work.

God's purpose for us too in following in his footsteps. Jesus began to teach them the Son of Man must suffer.

Thank God that he did not turn away. Thank God that he was not distracted by Peter's rebuke.

Thank God that he was not moved from the course of action which had set his heart to go and suffer for us.

Thank God that he went to the very bitter end and drank that cup to its very dregs.

[34 : 20] Thank God that he did it for us. Let's sing. Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Now may the God of grace who brought the blood, sorry, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

And may he work in us what is pleasing to him. Through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.