**Follow – Gospel of Mark - Wk 20 – The Turning Point**

**We are walking with Jesus, in his steps with his disciples – through the Gospel of Mark. Gospel = Good lifechanging amazing news of Jesus!**

**We are going verse by verse though the Gospel of Mark.**

**Jesus has just revealed to his disciples for the first time that he was going to be rejected, suffer, be crucified, and resurrected. Destroying every dream they had of the Messiah.**

**They did not know what to do with that. Then he said… and if you follow me, there is a cross for you too.**

**Let’s read it and let it sink in… Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

**What will you do with that? What is your internal response? You are to take up a cross? Does it confront you, or bore you?**

**THE DECISION – Do you really want to be my disciple?**

**What Jesus said here is shocking - sometimes we lose the impact of it because “cross” doesn’t conjure up the same images it did to them…**

**For us, the cross has become a sentimental symbol of our faith… Nothing sentimental, decorative, or beautiful for them. They were all too familiar of its pain. It was an image of oppression, family loss, torture, shame, and horrific death.**

**Jesus says - You’ve seen the miracles, been fed, healed, given sight and hearing ears, had demons cast out – Do you want to follow me? (The crowd shouts - Yeah!) Okay… then you have to die to self and let go of everything. (Booo!) It is time to make a decision.**

**Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?**

**THE COST – To follow Jesus will cost you everything**

**The upside-down kingdom- the paradoxes of Jesus!**

**You want to live – you have to die. You want to find life - you have to lose life.**

**You want to win – you have to lose. You want to receive – you have to give.**

**You want to be well - you must be sick. You want to be free- you must be a slave**

**You want rest – pick up my yoke. You want to be great – you have to be least.**

**You want to win – you must surrender.**

**Mark 8:36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? 37 Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?**

**That sin, that habit, that career, that belief, that relationship…**

**Whatever you are holding onto that you won’t let go of to follow Jesus can’t save you & you will eventually lose anyway.**

**Surrender - what are you holding on to?**

**- My stuff (things, possessions)**

**- My status (what people think)**

**- My sin (habits, temptations)**

**- My self (your life and future)**

**The Blank check**

**\*\* Salvation is free but to be a disciple, you will soon find out, will cost you everything.**

**You can’t earn it, pay for it, or work for it – it is freely given, received by faith. But to believe and follow it costs everything.**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer Theologian (Cost of Discipleship) - said it best: “When Jesus bids a man to follow him, he bids him come and die.”**

**Christianity is not “sloppy grace” or “easy believing.” It is not simply saying a prayer and you’re in - it is a turning from self to follow Christ.**

**John 12:23 Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.**

**You will never live until you walk down death row with Jesus**

**Jesus not a handy man, showing up in life with a little duct tape. He is coming in to tear down the entire structure and rebuild it.**

**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 them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” 9:1 And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”**

**THE RESULT – Man’s Persecution and God’s Glory**

**“be ashamed” refers to the response to persecution that will follow those who follow Jesus. In the face of persecution what will you do?**

**For those who endure it – the glory of God is yours!**

**Jesus out of love for us was not ashamed to take up a cross and bear the weight of the worlds sin, shame, and sentence.**

**God left his throne and identified himself with me as human and picked up a cross to save me. Is this not a God worth leaving everything for?**

**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 them when he comes…**

**“You’re just trying to manipulate us. Trying to make us feel bad.” Jesus asks for in everything. We can’t rewrite it or change it. All you can do is decide how you will respond to it.**

**But with it come persecution – and glory.**

**The Super bowl is tonight. This year tickets were $41,000 for lower midfield. (now 200,000 on secondary sites) – that is expensive!!! But good news they are only - $10,000 (back upper level). Reality is there are no cheap seats.**

**Many believe they can pay a little less to be with Jesus. I’ll just watch and cheer. There are no cheap seats in the kingdom. The Cost is high. The cost of discipleship is everything.**

**Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

* **Whoever…**

**Anyone and everyone. Regardless of past & background.**

* **Wants to be my disciple…**

**Lit means “follower” (Some translations - “If anyone wants to come after me…”)**

**Jesus is not calling coverts and church goers – but disciples.**

* **Must…**

**A requirement, not extra elective – This is not the Christian Gold package. This is not AP – advanced placement Christianity. You must...**

* **Deny themselves…**

**Culture and society says to and invites you to indulge yourself. But the upside-down kingdom says – you have life you have to let go of life.**

**- Repent of sin (turnaround – road out – danger ahead!)**

**- Reject indulgence (fight the flesh, materialism, selfishness)**

**- Relinquish role as king of your life**

* **Take up their cross…**

**Your whole life as an offering to Christ. Willing to embrace hardship and possibly death. True evangelism will produce persecution.**

**All the apostles except 1 – was martyred many were crucified.**

* **And Follow me**

**To follow is to do the things that Jesus does. To find yourself where Jesus goes. To love the people Jesus loves.**

**It means becoming more like Jesus every day as you follow.**

**We think of persecution and think - Yes, I would die for Jesus? Okay… Will you live for Jesus? At school, work, in your neighborhood. What you call radical – Jesus calls normal.**

**What does it cost to be a disciple? Everything**

**Simply put – a disciple leaves it all to follow Jesus.**

**I Am A Disciple - This written declaration was found in Zimbabwe in a room among the papers of a pastor who was martyred for his Christian faith. It is the moving testimony of a martyr. (contributed by Dr. Nina Gunter who got it from veteran missionary Louise Robinson Chapman (Africa: 1920-1940) Play video**

**The video does not include his last statement – “I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till everyone knows, work till He stops me and when He comes for His own, He will have no trouble recognizing me because my banner will have been clear.” I am a disciple!**

**There are no cheap seats in the kingdom. This was a turning point for them and a turning point for you today. What will you do with this?**

**Are you ready to give Jesus a blank check? Here is all I am, all I have, all I ever hope to be. I will follow.**