

JESUS

#UNFILTERED

THE GOSPEL OF MARK
MEET JESUS UNFILTERED



MARK: Jesus Unfiltered

Messiah - Mark 8:27-38

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)

Connect: How can you make sure you hear the word this week?

Warm-Up

1. What does our culture generally think being a Christian actually means? If you were to ask one of your non-Christian friends, what do you think they would say?

Read Mark 8:27-30

2. In verses 27–28, what are the different answers people give about who Jesus is? What do these answers get right and what do they miss?
3. What is significant about Peter declaring, “You are the Christ (Messiah)”? What would that have meant in a first-century Jewish context?
4. In our culture today, what are some common views of Jesus? (Good teacher? Moral example? Spiritual guide?) How are these similar to the “crowds”?
5. What is the difference between being a fan of Jesus and confessing Him as Messiah and Lord?

Read Mark 8:31-33

6. According to verse 31, what does Jesus say the Messiah must do? Why is the word “must” important?
7. Why do you think suffering and death were so hard for Peter to accept? What kind of Messiah was he likely expecting?
8. Jesus rebukes Peter strongly. What does this tell us about how serious it is to reshape Jesus according to our own expectations?
9. In what ways are we tempted to “edit” Jesus accepting the parts we like and ignoring the parts we find difficult (e.g. money, sexuality, loving enemies)?

Read Mark 8:34-38

10. Read verse 34 carefully. What does it practically mean to “deny yourself” and “take up your cross”? How would this have sounded to Jesus’ original hearers?
11. Verse 35 talks about losing your life to save it. What does that paradox mean?
12. In Australia today, where is it easiest to drift into being a comfortable “fan” rather than a committed follower? (Think: priorities, calendar, career, reputation, lifestyle.)
13. Jesus says the cost is high but the reward is greater (vv. 36–38). What are the promises held out to those who follow Him? How does eternal perspective help us persevere?
14. Is there an area of your life where you are treating Jesus more as advisor than Lord? What would it look like this week to take up your cross in that area?

PRAY: *Gracious God, help us deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow you wholeheartedly. Shape our hearts, align our wills to yours, and grow us as faithful disciples. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

TITLE: JESUS - Messiah

PASSAGE: Mark 8:27-38

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: Jesus is God's Messiah who has come to die and rise for us and we are commanded to follow Him.

STRUCTURE:

- The Messiah's Identity [8:27-30]
- The Messiah's Job [8:31-33]
- The Messiah's Command [8:34-38]

- If someone was to ask you 'what does it mean to be a Christian'? Or what does it look like to be a Christian, I wonder what would you say?
- What does it actually mean in simple terms because people are simple folk - what does it mean to be a Christian?
- Now in our western culture which has been largely shaped by judeo-Christian teaching, people might say something like:
 - Well it looks like going to church most Sundays
 - Praying, fasting over Lent...
 - Being generally a good moralistic person...not swearing, not lying,
 - Social Justice type people....
 - And yes, that might describe the fruit of being a Christian...but what's at the heart of being a Christian?
- Well - Jesus tells us here in these verses.
- Being a Christian doesn't mean doing jobs. It doesn't just mean being a good upright citizen...
- Being a Christian means - taking up our cross daily and following the Messiah. Following Jesus.
 - It means, laying everything down, all that we are, all that we have, all that we have planned for our life, even who we are related to - and prioritising Jesus over EVERYTHING.

- Now in our series so far, we have been wrestling with the question of the identity of Jesus.
- That's at the heart of Mark. And so far in Chapters 1-8, Mark has been building the case of the authority of Jesus.
 - His authority to heal, forgive, teach - his authority over creation itself!
- But now he shifts. From chapter 8 onwards, we'll begin to see not only who Jesus is, but also what this Jesus came to do.
- But before we get there, we need to get one thing straight - who is this Jesus? And Jesus seeks to address this with his disciples - his closest 12 followers.

- **The Messiah's Identity**
- V27 "And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."
- Jesus firstly gets a quick pulse check. He gets a read of the room.
- And he also gets the disciples talking and thinking!
 - *If you're leading a small group discussion, a good tactic to use if the discussion is stopped, is to rephrase the question from the personal to the general.*
 - *You might have noticed this in our home group questions here - there are a decent amount of questions that start with "If you were to ask your non-Christian friend xyz, what do you think they'd say!"*
- Well - Jesus is doing the same thing here.
- But Mark is also highlighting something.

- We haven't had a chance to go deeper into this yet, but we've seen time and time again that Jesus is a popular bloke.
- Everywhere he goes, the crowds follow!
- The Crowds are a major character in the book of Mark! Following Jesus from place to place, even outrunning and out pacing him at times!
- But what do the crowds actually think about Jesus?
- The disciples answer:
 - That they think he might be John the Baptist raised from the dead...we get the account of John's death earlier in Mark...
 - Some say that Jesus is Elijah returned! Elijah was a prophet in the times of the Kings. He did some miracles, he had fantastic teaching from God - AND according to 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah didn't die, but was taken up to heaven! So if we squint and tilt our heads as we look at Jesus, perhaps he could be Elijah
 - Others - just say that he is one of the prophets. One of the people who was to be a mouthpiece sent from God to the people of Israel.
- So the crowds recognise that Jesus is a significant figure - otherwise they probably wouldn't have been following him as closely!!
 - But no more than that...
- It's almost like the crowds are FANS of Jesus. Not necessarily FOLLOWERS of Jesus.
- It's interesting at the moment, that there seems to be a lot of vocal *FANS* of Jesus?
 - There are people who propose that Jesus is USEFUL, SIGNIFICANT, GENERALLY GOOD..
 - The crazy popular podcaster Joe Rogan is a BIG fan of Jesus and Christianity...
 - The conservative pop psychologist Jordan Petersan is a BIG fan of Jesus....
 - The historian Tom Holland is a BIG fan of Jesus and constantly claims that he is the most significant person in human history...
 - Even staunch and almost angry atheist Richard Dawkins has said that he likes the values of Jesus and Christianity.
 - These types of people may say that Jesus was a good teacher - but nothing more...
- The Crowds are alive and well today...the FANS of Jesus are alive and well...
 - Maybe you're here today and a FAN of Jesus...
- Well, there's so much more to Jesus than just a historical figure and good teachings...
- And so Jesus now turns the screws on the disciples...he puts the spotlight on them.
- We don't know historically how long the disciples would have been following him by this point...it was probably at least several months, or as much as a couple of years and a half!
- And this is what happens:
- V29 "And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ."
- You are the Christ. The Messiah.
- Peter gets it completely right! He is the first human to proclaim this.
- He says that Jesus is the Messiah that was prophesied about throughout the Old Testament. The Messiah was to serve as God's agent, God's king in the world - and he was to establish God's Kingdom in the world.
 - Jesus is the ONLY Hope of the world!!
- Peter isn't just a fan of Jesus, but he recognises who Jesus truly and actually is.
- This is the case that Mark has been building all along - Jesus **is** the long awaited, Jewish Messiah.
- But what he came to do was unexpected.

- **The Messiah's Job**

- V31 “And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly.”
- Jesus, the Messiah, came to die!
 - ‘The Son of Man’ was a title used for the Messiah in Daniel in the Old Testament, and it was one of Jesus’ favourite ways of describing himself.
- And Jesus told them at least three times, if not more, in no uncertain terms, in plain Aramaic (not in parables as with his other teachings) - that he HAD to die and rise.
- Notice, Jesus doesn’t say that he ‘might’ suffer...or that suffering and death was a potential...no he said that he **MUST** suffer many things and die and rise.
- His death and resurrection is the centre of God’s plan for the salvation of the world
- It HAD to happen. There was no other way!
- That’s why he came!
- That’s the way by which we can be saved and our sins forgiven - through the cross and resurrection of Jesus!

- But even immediately after getting it so right about Jesus, Peter gets it so wrong:
 - V32b “And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.”
- Peter’s expectations of a Messiah - wasn’t of a suffering Messiah, but of a victorious one!
- So he rebuts Jesus!
 - *Can you imagine Peter taking Jesus aside from the rest of the disciples...and saying “Look Jesus, mate, don’t be so defeatist! We’re going to win...we’re going to kick out these Romans! We’re going to reclaim the kingdom for the Israelites! Enough of this suffering talk!!”*
- Peter was trying to shape Jesus into what PETER thought the Messiah should be. He was trying to constrain Jesus, restrain Jesus, cordon off Jesus from certain things.
- But Jesus’ response is equally as shocking
 - V33 “But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”
- I reckon, these are some of the harshest words of Jesus recorded! He identifies Peter’s motives as Satanic! Evil!
- Even calling Peter himself Satan!
- Just as a side note:
 - One of the worst errors that people can fall into is trying to create Jesus in our own image.
 - That is, we see Jesus’ life and teaching clearly spelled out in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, but either reject it or reshape it into what we want him to be, rather than taking Jesus for who he actually is.
 - We see clear teaching on our use of money, and giving to the poor - and disregard it as being ‘too social justicy’
 - We can see clear teaching on sexuality - and disregard it as too restricting and out of date
 - We can see clear teaching on loving our enemy - and push it to the side, because it’s too hard...
 - And when we do these things, we aren’t setting our mind on the things of God, but on the things of Man! We’re no better than Peter!
- But when we accept Jesus as our Lord - then he must be Lord of all. And Lord on His own terms, not on our own terms....
- And that’s what he requires. He requires us to lay down everything - for him..

- **The Messiah’s Command**

- And this is where we return to our opening question: What does it mean to be a Christian? A follower of Jesus?
 - It's not enough to be a FAN of Jesus. It's not enough to just do GOOD STUFF for Jesus.
- To be a follower of Jesus, is to give our whole lives into his hands.
- V34 "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
- We can so easily glance over this today and not really think too much of it...but hearing these words in the first century would have been utterly shocking.
- We make the cross so sterile and polite these days. We wear it as a piece of jewellery, we may have one hanging up at home, we definitely have a few here!
 - *BUT you don't really see people wearing an electric chair around their neck as jewellery these days do you? You don't see the hangman's noose either...because they are objects and instruments of killing people! And death! It would be crude and just frankly weird!*
- And in the first century - the thought of wearing a cross around one's neck would be completely and utterly ridiculous and socially shocking and vomit inducing!
- Because the crucifixion wasn't just designed to kill, it was designed to shame, torture, and humiliate the victim. It was a weapon of terror.
- The victim would have been first flogged and then tied up or nailed to a wooden cross. They may have been stripped of their clothes - their raw, wounded backs up against the splintery wood.
 - And to breathe, they had to push themselves up on their nail-pierced feet to open up their airway to get a breath of air.
- The sites of crucifixions were often along public roads - so the person would have been completely exposed and humiliated.
- And the person would die slowly and painfully - either from exposure to the elements, or from asphyxiation - suffocation from not being able to lift up your body to breathe anymore.
 - In fact, we get the word excruciating from crucifixion.
- The cross was so shameful that you wouldn't bring it up in conversation. Roman Citizens weren't allowed to be put to death on the cross. It was reserved for the lowest of the low in society.
- And to make things worse (if that's possible) is that the victim was forced to carry their cross to the site of execution.
- So with this in the background let's hear Jesus' words again V34 "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. "
- Following the Messiah, means following in his footsteps and dying each day! It means denying ourselves, denying what we want, denying our fantasies, denying our plans - ripping them all up, and giving our lives entirely over to HIM!
- It means taking up our instrument of death and torture - and dying and following him!
 - For Jesus' disciples in the first century, for some it literally meant crucifixion. According to tradition, Peter himself was crucified! He took up his cross and followed Jesus and lost his life for the sake of Jesus.
- But for us here today in Australia - I highly doubt that it will ever come to that.
- But the command is still the same, and we need to hear it more than ever.
- Because it's still very easy to be a Christian in Australia. Yes, there can be complexities in the workplace on certain issues, more so now than in the last 10-20 years...but we aren't being driven out of town, and we aren't being put to death.

- And because it's so easy, we can so easily drift from our faith, and even minimalise our faith..treat Jesus as a Celebrity, rather than Lord. Treat Christianity as a cultural thing we do - rather than who we are.
 - In Australian Christianity We can:
 - Treat Sunday gatherings as the first thing to come off the calendar if other things come up;
 - Treat Jesus commandments as just good advice and not actual binding commandments;
 - Treat our faith as something we 'perform' or we 'do' through bible reading and prayer and taking communion - but it does not have any bearing on the rest of our lives.
 - Make our own plans for our lives - potentially even good ones "for God" without considering if God wants us to do those things for him!
 - Go ahead with our own ambitions and own agenda, without considering God in the picture.
 - Act more as a fan of Jesus rather than a follower of Jesus.
- And if we act in these ways - we aren't following Jesus' commandment here to take up our cross for him!
- But This is what Jesus commands - if you want life with him, if you want life in his Kingdom, if you want to follow him - then you must lay down ALL OF YOUR LIFE for him...even if it means being put to death for him.
 - This is what it means when we pray, when we participate in the Lord's Supper, 'we offer ourselves as a LIVING SACRIFICE' to you...
 - This is what it means to pray 'Your kingdom come, your WILL BE DONE' in earth, in heaven, in our lives.
 - Of course, we won't ever do this perfectly - that isn't what Jesus requires.
 - But what he requires is for us to place our sinful lives into his hand!
- And this is what it means to be a Christian!! ...//
- Does this sound hard? Does this prick our hearts a bit? Well good. It should. These words should constantly bring us back to the heart of following Jesus...
- And the way to grow into this, is growing and constantly correcting our view of Jesus.
- An incorrect or small view of Jesus, will inevitably lead to a small growth in maturity.
- If we treat Jesus as the crowds did - as a celebrity - we won't grow
- If we treat Jesus as Peter did - trying to fit him into our own image - we won't grow.
- But if we treat Jesus as our Messiah and Lord, denying ourselves and giving everything we have and all that we are to him - then we will grow as disciples.
- The cost is great - but the reward is even greater.
 - What will we gain if we lose our life and hand it to Jesus?
 - Entrance to his eternal kingdom. Forgiveness of our sin. Freedom from guilt and shame. Assurance of eternal life. An abundance of hope and peace!
- "It may cost much to be a Christian, but you may be sure it pays... I bid you persevere and press on. I dare say you often feel your heart faint, and are sorely tempted to give up in despair. Your enemies seem so many, your besetting sins so strong, your friends so few, the way so steep and narrow, you hardly know what to do. But still I say, persevere and press on.....When we see as we have been seen, and look back on the journey of life, we shall wonder at our own faintness of heart. We shall marvel that we made so much of our cross, and thought so little of our crown." JC Ryle - Holiness.