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What It Is Really Like to Follow Jesus as King

Mark 6:7-13

INTRODUCTION

The Bible calls the body of believers in Jesus the bride of Christ. Are you married to Jesus?

We'll get back to that question. Let me switch pictures on you.

Mark 6, our text for this morning, is set up, arguably, like a football game.

Picture a team in the locker room getting pumped up and running out on the field invincible, courageous, with victory already in their grip. "We will, we will rock you..."

Mark 6:7-13, our passage last week is sort like that team – the apostles go running out, the battle is joined things are looking good: many demons are being cast out, many sick healed, many are called to repentance... Yeah, team Jesus!

But the announcer who's calling the game for some reason goes to a sidebar story that talks about one of Jesus' own going down – a hero of the faith is killed.

The music and the mood change... Now it is more reflective, looking deeper for the good in the bad...

... when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

The cost of the game which had temporarily been shoved to the sideline while everyone psyched up to win, is now brought close to each player on team Jesus.

Playing on this team in this game will cost you, possibly even your life.

Let's read this side bar story the announcer tells in the middle of calling the first away game for team Jesus.

It is in Mark 6:14 – 29, and it's about John the Baptist.

[read 6:14-29]

Then as somber as that story is the announcer picks up the game again and in verse 30 says... [read 30-32]

The twelve were back with Jesus and things were therefore good. They probably debriefed and told them of all the truly great stuff they had been able to do on their first short missions trip = "game." There is not denying that ...

I. Following Jesus has the Greatest Value

There are many activities in life that come our way that are of value to us. I appreciate and see value in: walking the dog, paddling canoes, relaxing on the couch...; and of course there is greater value in spending time with my wife and my children and my friends...But, I truly believe that following Jesus has the greatest value of all!

A. Look at **what the 12 apostles had** in the passage we covered last week 6:7-13:

After spending time with Him, learning from Him, seeing Him do miracles that demonstrated to them they were in the presence of someone great, even God's Messiah?! – He sent them out as His representatives, extending the reach of His ministry and message after giving them:

- Power – Over Sickness;
- Authority – Over Demons;
- Position as preachers of repentance in the name of the King.

B. Easy to continue naming **the value that is ours when we follow Jesus**

- Purpose – Be who God designed you to be and do what He designed you to do
- Communion with God – Kit as adopted sons and daughters
- The Indwelling Holy Spirit
- Friendship with Jesus – I call you friends if you obey...
- Forgiveness
- Eternal life
- Fellowship

It is so good to be a follower of Jesus. Thank You Lord for calling me to be one of Yours! But even though we can easily appreciate that following Jesus has the greatest value to us in all of life, we have to acknowledge the undeniable reality that...

I. Following Jesus has the Highest Cost

The disciples of Jesus were called by God to **follow** Him (Mark 1:17; 2:14). John the Baptist was called by God to **go ahead** of Jesus to prepare the way for Him.

Whenever we choose to respond to the call of God in our lives, there is an associated cost. Mark is alerting his readers, the would-be followers of Jesus, to the high cost they will pay when they respond to God's calling that they would follow Jesus.

Not counted, costs will wipe you out. Counted or expected, you are more able to take them with the package and they don't derail your faith. Mark doesn't want you, and I don't want you, to be surprised and disappointed when you encounter the costliness of following Jesus.

So he not only talks about the great value of following Jesus but the high cost as well. Sandwiched in between the sending out of the 12 and their return he tells the story of John the Baptist – a story that can not be told without facing the high cost of living according to God's call on your life.

A. What Responding to God's Call Cost John the Baptist

1. Recall some of Mark 6:14-29
2. Comments on Mark 6:14-29

Trans. John's preaching of repentance cost him his life. It is uncanny how John's difficulty presages Jesus' difficulties

B. What Responding to God's Call Cost Jesus

1. To Date in Mark – Rejection by His Family
2. Future in Mark – Increasing conflict and finally crucifixion

C. What Following Jesus as King Would Cost His Disciples

1. As pictured here by Mark in the Sending Out of the 12

At first there is no great cost noted besides traveling light and depending on God. In fact any costs are not discussed. Instead, we see them empowered, sent out, effective and then returning to Jesus – no costs seen.

2. But then there is this account of John the Baptist's death.

There are no explicit warnings: "as John paid with His life so you will pay with yours"; no logical links that communicate explicitly why Mark told this story in the middle of his account of the twelve being sent out and returning. It just hangs there like a backdrop setting a tone and a feeling for a scene in a play.

It is almost as if Mark has painted two pictures. The foreground picture is of the apostles going out with power and effectiveness, calling people to repentance and healing and casting out demons. It is in light colors, gold yellows

and blues and reds in crisp clean shapes and bold upbeat strokes.

The second picture is the backdrop (John's death at the hand of evil men). It is painted with dark colors of black, browns, grays in twisted confusing, tangled shapes with angry depressing strokes. It is harsh, it is evil, it is unjust, and in that picture is John, one of God's chosen people who responded to the call of God in faith.

I'd rather look at the painting of the twelve's success, but Mark thrusts the painting of John's death into view and we are forced to look at them both together.

What is he telling us?

There is a cost to following Jesus!

The gospel is not light alone; it is light in the darkness. It is not only that Jesus saves; it is that Jesus saves out of fallenness. It is not only that the King has come, it is that the King has come into a hostile world unwilling, as of yet, to embrace His rightful rule.

But do not only see the dark side of difficulty; see also the good that comes out of "bad."

Take note that John's death does not silence the message of Jesus. Rather at the same time that one of God's people falls, 12 go out and extend the reach of the very person John had come to point people to. John had won and finished his race.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Justin Martyr

"The tyrant dies and his rule ends, the martyr dies and his rule begins." Soren Kierkegaard

For Jesus first disciples, following Him brought the greatest value but at the highest cost.

With this passage and in any thoughtful accounting of the Christian life well lived we see that we are called to bring good news into a world where bad things still happen to even the best of God's people.

What does this reminder of the value of following Jesus and the related cost require of us?

III. It Requires Our Informed Embrace

Informed – I see the great value AND I see the high cost...

Embrace – I'm taking to myself the whole package.

ILLUS. 1 -- Like a marriage. For better for worse...

ILLUS. 2 – Like Hugging Your Teen

I think of a hug. Sometimes when I give someone a hug I'm pulling them to myself and expressing in my embrace the fact that I love them. I'm trying to press into them my love. There are times I have hugged my kids when words were not communicating the love and commitment I felt amidst the tension of things not right between us. Taking the whole package into your arms – the easy, the difficult; that which pleases you, and that which you wish was different.

A. We Must Embrace God in His Totality

Jesus

1. Not Just Jesus our Savior, Forgiver, Teacher and Friend
2. But also Jesus our King who Sends Us into Hostile Territory on Mission

to share the pain He did not excuse Himself from

Father

3. And Not Even Just Jesus in His Totality
4. But also God the Father who is sent the Son so that we might be redeemed as sons of our heavenly Father.

Holy Spirit

5. And not Just Jesus and God the Father
6. But also the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

We must embrace God in His totality, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and all that He has for us – both that which we can easily label good and that which we may see as “bad” trusting that God is able to work all things together for the good...

B. We Must Embrace God Intimately

1. Our is not to be a sterile relationship with God based on knowledge of facts about Him; but rather an intimate relationship of communion with God and particularly in a Father/Son, Parent/Child type of union, one characterized by mutual love, and our willing submission and respectful honor of God. Credit to – Pastor Kit

C. Embrace Who We Are In Relation to Jesus

1. We Must Fully Embrace Ourselves as
 - The saved of the Savior but also:
 - Subjects of the King
 - Sons and Daughters of God the Father
 - Partners with Each Other (Pairs)

Conclusion

Jesus, the King of the Kingdom of God, extends the reach of His mission through His followers – through us! What a great value to us to be those through whom He extends His reach!

What a high cost!

This passage makes me struggle with what we are going to do in our own following of Jesus who we now see more clearly is not only Savior who brings us good, but is also warrior and Lord and King who sends his followers on mission into dangerous places amongst evil people.

Are we going to follow as subjects and sons, or is the cost too high?

I came home yesterday afternoon after doing some work and asked myself, so what does this passage mean to my life tonight? And here is what I came up with: Johnny, it means that if you are on mission for Jesus, your Saturday night may not be easy. And it made me struggle with the whole principle of ease. Growing up in Hawaii: hang loose, don't work so hard, kick back, cruse...I like ease. I do ease better than I do anything else. But this thought crossed my mind: If life is easy, you may not be doing what God has designed you to do.

I subscribe to Discipleship Journal. Lori reads it and tells me what to read. I'm a guy. In this last issue there is an article on Alan Andrews the US Director of the Navigators, a solid Christian discipleship organization. Well He is retiring. But instead of moving to Hawaii and hanging loose he is moving to minister to the poorest of the poor. He is not retiring to cruse, but to serve. Crazy? Or are we crazy with our pursuit of ease?

I ask you this morning to embrace Him fully. It will cost you dearly yet it will bring you even more: More danger, more pain, maybe even, as was the case with John, death; but more life than you would otherwise live, more vitality as you live out what God has redeemed you to be and as you do what God has called you to do.

I'm informing you this morning that there is a significant cost to following Jesus. And I'm calling you to embrace Him, knowing that the cost is high.

Are you married to Jesus? Or are you still dating Him and the world both?

I take you Jesus to be my husband, and King; to have and to hold from this day forward; forsaking all others, being faithful to You, as long we both shall live.

Have you embraced Him in a no holds barred bear hug?

Embrace Him this morning as we pray!