

Talk Ten: COME AND DIE

What does it mean to follow Jesus?

AIM

- To recap Mark's teaching about the *identity, mission* and *call* of Jesus.
- To show that following Jesus means denying self, and taking up our cross.
- To give group members an opportunity to respond personally to the call of Jesus.

EXPLORE

- Have a leader read Mark 1:14-15.
 - *All through Christianity Explored we have heard about the good news. In Mark 1:14-15 it's mentioned twice. But to understand the good news, we need to understand the "bad news" first. What is the bad news in the following verses?*
 - *Mark 7:20-23* – We are naturally sinful people and sin comes from within us.
 - *Mark 9:43-47* – Sin left untreated will take us to hell.
 - *Mark 10:26-27* – It is impossible for us to save ourselves from our sin.
 - *"Jesus went...proclaiming the good news" (Mark 1:14). What is the good news answer to these session titles from the course?*
 - *Why did Jesus come?* The good news is that Jesus came to call sinners (Mark 2:17) and to cure our heart problem by giving His life as a ransom (Mark 10:45).
 - *Why did Jesus die?* The good news is that Jesus died to take the punishment we deserve, giving His life as a ransom for many. This opened up the way for us into God's presence (Mark 15:37-38).
 - *Why did Jesus rise?* The good news is that Jesus is alive, having conquered death. He offers forgiveness and life after death to all who will trust Him (Mark 16:6-7).
 - *How can God accept us?* The good news is that what is impossible for us is possible with God (Mark 10:26-27). We can't earn our acceptance with God—it is an undeserved gift. He freely offers it to us if we come humbly, like little children, and follow Jesus (Mark 10:15).
 - *"Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15) To repent literally means to turn back in the opposite direction to the one you were travelling in. To believe the good news means to act upon it, to build your life upon it. What would that mean for you?* The idea is that we must turn away from going our own way and turn towards God and start going His way; we may need to turn back from misunderstandings about God and sin; etc.

LISTEN (DVD)

- Mark 8:34 – “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.”
 - Do we only see the human face of Jesus, or can we see the divine face of Christ?
 - The disciples saw Jesus’ power and authority, but still asked, “Who is this?” Jesus was exasperated with them and asked, “Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?” (Mark 8:17-18) Who can possibly heal that kind of blindness? Well, as if to answer that question, Jesus gives a blind man his sight, but He does so gradually to make a point (Mark 8:22-25).
 - The gradual healing of the man’s sight reflects the gradual growth of the disciples’ understanding. Will the disciples finally be able to see who Jesus is? Jesus asks them that question, and Peter answers that Jesus is the Christ, God’s only chosen King (Mark 8:27-29). Finally, Peter sees it...or does he? Jesus recognizes that they are only partly cured (Mark 8:30). Although they understand who He is, they don’t yet see why He’s come or what it means to follow Him. That’s why Jesus immediately begins to teach them more about Himself (Mark 8:31)—it’s as if He’s starting to correct their partial vision.
 - Perhaps we can identify with Peter, for we might understand who Jesus is, but the idea of His death (i.e., why He came) fills us with horror and disgust (Mark 8:32). If we are like that, Jesus has some strong words for us (Mark 8:33)—if we have in mind the things of men, His death on a cross seems pointless, tragic, and weak. But seen a different way, having in mind the things of God, there’s never been a more powerful moment in all of human history...Jesus died for sinners, taking the punishment we deserved, so that we could enjoy the relationship with God that we were created to enjoy forever.
 - But there is one more thing that the disciples need to understand before they can see everything clearly. It’s not enough to see who Jesus is or even why He came—we must also see what it means to follow Him. Following Jesus means denying self and taking up our cross (Mark 8:34). It may cost us a great deal, but if we respond to Jesus’ call, there’s no doubt about the final outcome.
 - If we want to save our life, we must entrust it to Jesus, and He will save it (Mark 8:35-38). Jesus has ultimate authority over us, and we can trust Him (illustrated by the following story of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration in Mark 9:2-7). A true follower of Christ is someone who clearly sees what it will cost to follow Him, but does it joyfully anyway, knowing that Jesus is worth infinitely more. What he’s given up is nothing compared to what he’s gained.
 - What do you see when you look at Jesus?
 - His *identity*? Is He just a good man, or is He the Christ, the Son of God?
 - His *mission*? Is His death a tragic waste, or is it a rescue—a “ransom for many”?
 - His *call*? Is it a way of losing your life, or a way of gaining it? Is it a call to come and die, or can you see that because of His death and resurrection, He’s calling you to come and die and live?

DISCUSS

- *Was there something in particular that stood out or stuck you from the DVD?*
- *“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36) How would you answer that question?* Jesus’ point is to reveal the ultimate value of the human soul, and the need to be forgiven and put right with God by trusting Jesus.
- *How might you be ashamed of Jesus and His words (Mark 8:38)?* Embarrassment in front of friends, family, and colleagues if they discovered you were a Christian; unwillingness to tell others the good news about Jesus because of how people might react; fear of being treated as intolerant, homophobic, and anti-_____, etc. if you stand up for what Jesus said about “sensitive” areas
- *How would you score the following statement? (0 = completely unconvinced; 10 = very sure)*
 - Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - Jesus came to rescue me from my sin.
 - Following Jesus means denying myself and putting Jesus first, whatever the cost.

FOLLOW-UP

None