

IN HIS STEPS

Mark 8:27-38

Introduction:

"Imagine a field covered with freshly fallen snow. Off to the one side you notice two figures entering the field. The first is larger than the second—perhaps they are a father and his son. As they walk across the field you notice that the father pays no real attention to where he is going, but his son, on the other hand, follows directly behind, making a special effort to step in his father's footprints. After the two figures pass off the scene, you notice that there is only one set of tracks visible in the field, although two people had walked across it. The Christian life is kind of like that. Jesus calls us to follow Him. If we are truly disciples, followers of Christ, people ought to see not two tracks but only that of Christ, as we walk in His footsteps."

What are some of the characteristics of a disciple of Jesus Christ? What characterizes the life of such a person? As we look at our text this morning, I hope we will see some answers to those questions. We are going to be overlapping a bit with the passage we studied last week as we consider 8:27-38. We will not be dealing with this passage chronologically, but lifting certain principles from it. (*Stuart Briscoe – outline*)

A disciple of Jesus Christ is willing to confront the issues that Jesus raises.

When Jesus was here on earth, He did not hesitate to confront people with the realities of living for God. Throughout His ministry, He continually raised issues which any genuine follower of His cannot avoid.

How willing are you to come face to face with the issues which the Lord Jesus brings to our attention. In this passage there are three issues which we cannot duck away from if we want to be a disciple of Jesus.

Issue #1 - It is possible to totally waste your life. (vv. 35-37)

Obviously, the primary context of this challenge from Jesus is the unsaved person, the one who focusses only on this life and does nothing about his soul. When (s)he reaches the end of this life, they may have everything in this life, but if they have not made any plans for the next life, they are really without hope.

But I believe we can also make the application to those of us who know the Lord. We may have our reservation for heaven, but what are we taking with us? This is not something we like to think about, but if we are to be true disciples we must consider the value of what we are doing in life.

Is it possible that with all the good things that you are doing, that when you come to the end of your life, you could be forced to say, What a waste. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

That's the first issue – It is possible to totally waste your life.

Issue #2 - It is possible for well-meaning people to do the devil's work for him (vv. 31-33)

Peter could not understand or accept the idea that his Messiah would suffer and die. Because of that he was found opposing the work of God. He was opposing the very plan that God had to save the world from sin. By so doing, he was really doing the devil's work, which is always opposing the work of God.

Have you ever considered that sometimes, even though we sincerely believe that we are right we may actually be playing right into the devil's schemes?

Issue #3 - It is possible for people's lives to be affected by the warp and twist of the society in which they live. (v. 38)

We live in a sinful and adulterous generation, and we are not immune to the wickedness which is around us. We are surrounded by sin and iniquity in a society that has abandoned truth for error, and it is easy to be influenced and shaped by the world in which we live.

Question: As a disciple of Jesus, do I duck the issues that Christ raises or do I confront them and respond honestly and genuinely to them?

A disciple of Jesus Christ is ready to confirm the claims that Christ made. (vv. 27-29)

We looked at these verses last week, so I will not spend much time on this point today. But it is important to consider the claims that Christ made. He raised this issue with his disciples by asking a couple of questions.

The first question is, *“Who do people say that I am?”* (Briefly discuss the responses.)

He is concerned that we are not just giving other people's opinions but a personal conviction and so after asking this question, He asks a much more personal question, *“But who do you say that I am?”*

Peter's conviction - he knew that Jesus was the Christ. He expressed that when Jesus asked for their personal opinion.

But then Jesus told Peter to be quiet about it. Why would Jesus tell Peter not to say anything about Him to others? Because he had the wrong idea of who Christ was.

There are many people who are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, but the Christ they are convinced He is does not exist.

As disciples of Jesus, we need to confirm the claims that Jesus makes, claims that He is the Christ, but what we need is not a Christ of imagination but the Christ of revelation. We need to understand the person of Jesus Christ - who He really is.

A disciple of Jesus Christ is eager to conform to the pattern that Christ outlines. (v. 34)

In verse 34 Jesus Christ outlines for us the pattern for being a disciple. There are four steps that he gives us:

1. Come after me

There must be the desire to come after Christ. The term suggests:

- 1) to will, have in mind, intend
 - 1a) to be resolved or determined, to purpose
 - 1b) to desire, to wish

There must first be the desire – to walk with Him, to follow Him, to be like Him, to pattern our lives after Him.

2. Deny yourself

The word means “to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's own interests”

There is a big difference between self-denial and the denial of self. Self-denial has to do with self-punishment. Denial of self, means I make myself of less importance than others.

Philippians 2:3-4 – “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

There must be a willingness to put away my own desires and take up His will - a willingness to say, “Not my will, but yours, Lord.” That is denying self - putting me and my needs and desires after the desires of Christ and others.

3. Take up your cross

Discuss cross-bearing - not suffering, but death - to self, to sin. The cross was an instrument of death, of crucifixion. Are you ready to crucify sin and self and the old nature.

Paul knew what it was to bear the cross:

Gal 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

4. Keep on following

- 1) to follow one who precedes,
- 2) to join one as a disciple, become or be his disciple
 - 2a) side with his party

The tense of the verb (present active imperative) suggests the idea of ongoing action – keep on following. Don't quit. The disciple of Jesus does not start and then bail out when it becomes difficult. He does not give us that option.

CONCLUSION

"In 1519, the Spanish explorer, Hernando Cortez left Spain for Mexico with a force of about seven hundred men and a fleet of eleven ships. His mission was to conquer Mexico and to explore rumors of treasure hidden in the interior of Mexico. According to history when he arrived on the shores of Mexico he purposely set fire to his entire fleet of ships. His men on shore watched their only means of retreat sink to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. There was now only one direction to move- forward into the Mexican interior to meet whatever might come their way."

To be a disciple of Jesus means that we must not look back, we must destroy all avenues of retreat and follow Him, determining to keep on following.

Are there things you need to do differently this week to show your commitment to being a disciple?

1. Do you need to address some of the issues that Jesus raised?
 - Wasting life – what are you doing that has eternal value?
 - Doing the devil's work – is it possible that you have confused God's plan and responded in opposition to Him?
 - Are there things in our society that are negatively affecting your life?
2. Do you need to reaffirm the claims of Jesus Christ?
 - Do you understand clearly who Jesus Christ is?
3. Do you need to reconsider the pattern Christ has outlined?
 - Come after me
 - Deny yourself
 - Take up your cross
 - Keep on following

Let's keep on following in the footsteps of our Master.

Closing Hymn: # 470 – Footsteps of Jesus