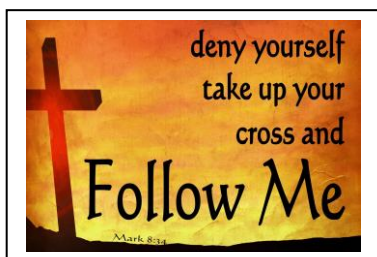


WHAT GOOD IS IT TO GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD BUT LOSE YOUR SOUL?

Review: What effect has the study on “Why do you worry?” had on your frame of mind? Have you experienced more peace? (Philippians 4. 6-7)



Lectio: This teaching follows directly after Peter’s answer to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” which we studied in week 1. Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (verses 27–30 in Mark 8) As you read today’s passage, bear in mind this context. Read the passage aloud, then silently to yourselves, thinking about the effect of Jesus’ words on the disciples, Peter and the crowd. Then read aloud again.

Explore:

- This is the first of three occasions on which Jesus tells the disciples what is going to happen to him. See Mark 9. 30-32, 10. 32-34. On each occasion the disciples’ responses are inappropriate, and in 9.32 it says they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. Why do you think Jesus began to prepare the disciples at this point in their journey with him?
- In Matthew’s version, which we read before, when Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.” We considered how the Holy Spirit can reveal truth to us. Mark did not record that conversation, but both gospels contain Jesus’ rebuke, in verse 33 in today’s passage. How could Peter be at one moment speaking inspired words of truth, and in the next voicing an attitude which Jesus says comes from Satan?
- How must Jesus have felt about what he knew was going to happen? Think about how he shrank from it in the Garden of Gethsemane. It cost him extreme anguish to say, “Father, not what I want but what you want.” In Matthew’s version of today’s passage, when Peter says “Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turns and says to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! **You are a stumbling block to me;** you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Do you think he rebuked Peter so sharply because Peter was voicing the very temptation he was battling with? In fact, was it actually Peter he was rebuking? Can we sometimes be mouthpieces for Satan? See James chapter 3 (which is entitled Taming the Tongue!) especially verses 6-11.
- Peter doesn’t want Jesus to face suffering and a horrible death. But Jesus draws a contrast between “the concerns of God” and “human concerns”. Does this throw light on the teaching which follows? “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” John Stott’s daily prayer says “Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow you.” What does this mean to you, in everyday down-to-earth terms?
- Now we confront the question: “What good is it to gain the whole world but lose your soul?” Jim Elliott was one of five young American missionaries who were killed in 1956 during Operation Auca, an attempt to evangelize the Huaorani people of Ecuador. He famously said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” What does it mean, to lose your soul? Last time, we looked at Matthew 6. 19-21. Look at these verses again.

TURN OVER

- What is the part of you which lives on when your body dies? John 3.16 says: “God loved the world so much, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Respond: How do you need to respond to this teaching? Reflect in silence and/or share with each other and pray for one another.

You might want to listen to the song “I will offer up my life” and use it as a prayer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihUko9M6dpA>