



## DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

MARK 8:31

October 2022

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE BIG REVEAL

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*Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

Mark 8:31 NRSV

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The default mode for religious people is to want a list of expectations or regulations that will instruct acceptable behavior. We tend to think that if we only knew exactly what to do, we would do it. We even get a little upset with God for not making things more clear. We cling to the belief that being a good person is the goal, and that God's favor is dependent upon our being good. The New Testament gospel (the kerygma) counters that belief system, and **the implications of Christ's finished work become mandates for our ethic.**

The Gospel of Mark features the arrival of the kingdom of God in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus (see Mark 1:14-15). The first part of the book shows how Jesus' new kingdom on earth is superior to all power on earth. He forgives sin, stops storms, heals the sick, casts out demons, etc. Then as we approach the central part of Mark's account, we see the transition. It starts with the big reveal: As Jesus and His disciples approach Caesarea Philippi, He asks them what others were saying about His identity. Then He asks who they think He is. Peter, as a spokesman

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for the group, declares that He is the Messiah - the long awaited one who will set things straight forever. Jesus states that this is not a conclusion that any human mind would reach alone. It is revealed to Peter by the Father.

Of course Peter and the others expect the Messiah to set things right and establish justice in the same way that other kingdoms had been replaced by bigger and better political, economic, and military kingdoms. Persia had taken over Babylon. Greece had displaced Persia. Rome had conquered Greece. They now expected Jesus to displace Rome with a similar kind of destruction. Jesus pulled them to the side and explained that the revolution He brought was much more radical than any before. And it could only be understood by revelation from the Father (see Mark 8:27-38).

***Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.***

Mark 8:31 NRSV

Peter was appalled. Was Jesus giving up? You don't set things right by losing to your enemy. Peter's rebuke of Jesus was severe. Jesus tells him that his thinking is aligned with fallen humanity's perspective and is coming from Satan. By doing so, Jesus contrasts His kingdom and earthly kingdoms. All earthly kingdoms are based on human thinking that has been infected by sin, selfishness, and Satan's accusations. The newly arrived kingdom, in contrast, is based on the thinking of God whose love is stronger than all the accumulated powers of the universe. The point Jesus is making is this: He is the Messiah. His kingdom is radically different. The implications for His disciples is that they will be radically different in the same way He is. If He goes to the cross, they will embrace their own cross.

It is significant that Jesus says that He "must" go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of the religious and civil rulers, die, and be resurrected. Why the "must"? There are at least three reasons for the necessity of such action: (1) We need a love that no one else can give. We are designed to

be attached to a person who loves and delights in us regardless of our merit or performance. Our hearts have an insatiable thirst for such a love and will only be satisfied when it is experienced. We make the mistake of placing such expectations on family, spouses, pastors, and political leaders. They simply can't provide what only God has, and He expressed it fully through the coming of Jesus as our representative. The fallen human mind cannot comprehend the depth of such love, but our hearts will not be content without it. (2) We need a pardon that only innocent blood can grant. Forgiveness is not without pain. It always costs someone something. If it doesn't hurt, it isn't forgiveness. God paid the awful price for our sin. It is fully paid, and we are empowered to forgive others with what He has given us. We share His sufferings. It is our assignment. We can't forgive people for their sin against God, but we can forgive their sins against us. We are reflecting His kingdom and the implications of His pardon. (3) We need to see the inadequacy of all earthly kingdoms to fully govern people. The cross of Jesus revealed the love and mer-

cy of God, and it also revealed the corruption of the religious and civil structures that governed society. All earthly institutions are run by fallen humans and they will reflect the corruption of the heart of those who make and enforce the laws. It should come as no surprise that there is injustice in all social structures. Humans created them and humans sustain them. The leaven of the kingdom of God is intended to infect them and progressively feature justice instead of power and profit. They are to be honored for what they are, and we are to continue trying to move them toward liberating people rather than oppressing them. The implications of the gospel will cause us to exalt generosity, gratitude, and service more than taking power, ruling over, and gaining profit.

The declaration of Jesus that all followers must take up their cross has been interpreted variously through the years. He is simply but powerfully saying that to share His life is to adopt His mission, and that will look like His own submission to the Father out of love. Our agenda must become His agenda. We will nev-

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er find ourselves looking for ourselves. We find ourselves as we look to Him, His work, and His mission. We don't just try to imitate Him in our own strength and with our limited human perspective. We share His life. He loves us, thereby we can and must love others. He forgives us, and we forgive others. It is not a burdensome duty. It is our life. We enjoy the Father just like He does. The Father gives, sacrifices, and serves. Now we do. It is the highest level of joy. We discover that losing our own lives is finding His life.

The bane of joyful living is the religion of will power. Trying with our own might to alter our default behavior by willing it to be so is tiring and ultimately defeating. Dying to our own concept of measuring up and embracing His perspective releases us to live the future life now, while we wait with confident hope for the culmination. Jesus longs to be more than a boss that tells us what to do and then rewards or admonishes us based on our performance. He is our constant savior. He saves us from daily weaknesses, failures, and limitations as we live in joyful communion with Him. His

finished work allows us to rest. His love satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts, and His life empowers us to infect our surroundings with an upside down reality of dying to live, losing to win, and loving to destroy hate. Just as He said that He "must" go to Jerusalem to the cross, we "must" submit to His reality of the cross for us. Otherwise we are playing religious games trying to use the Messiah to bolster our own agendas. He won't conform, and we will ultimately be disappointed in Him, even wanting to rebuke Him as did Peter. The cross is a must. It changed everything.



P.O. Box 2022  
Colleyville, TX 76034  
(817) 267-9224  
Email: [Contact@KerygmaVentures.com](mailto:Contact@KerygmaVentures.com)  
[www.KerygmaVentures.com](http://www.KerygmaVentures.com)