
Sermon
on Mark 8:31–38 | “Depths of Love”
”*For the Sake of the Gospel*”

∴ ZERO ∴

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

∴ Amen.

∴ ONE ∴

What would you do if a friend of yours told you
that he was going to suffer and die?

What would you do if this friend told you that
he will be rejected, that he was to become an
outcast?

And what would you do when this friend also
told you that he was going to rise again—after
three days?

What would you do?

Or first, what would you **THINK**?

And **THEN**, what would you **DO**?

::: TWO :::

We have heard of such a situation. And we have heard what Peter did.

He took Jesus aside to rebuke him—so we read.

καὶ προσλαβόμενος ὁ Πέτρος αὐτὸν ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ.ⁱ

ἐπιτιμάω—this Greek word can be translated as:

“to rebuke, reprove, reproach, also to speak sternly to prevent or stop an action.”ⁱⁱ

Speak sternly to prevent an action. Hear, hear.

So back to the question:

What would you do if a friend of yours told you that he was going to suffer and die?

::: THREE :::

I can understand Peter so well.

He just made clear that he knows his friend, Jesus. He is travelling with him. And travellers get to know each other.

A few verses earlier Mark wrote that Jesus...

“ON THE WAY [...] asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”²⁸ And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”²⁹ He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”ⁱⁱⁱ”

Mark 8:27b-29

Peter knows his friend.

When this exact Jesus, his friend, now speaks about suffering and dying, he cannot stand it. *He surely wants to prevent that.*

::: FOUR :::

I can understand Peter so well.

When a friend of mine told me such news, I would be shocked.

Especially because suffering and dying out of rejection, as the consequence of your own action, is not unpreventable.

It is not fate. Something can be done. That's why he takes Jesus aside, that's why he **REBUKES** him.

We don't know exactly what Peter said. Mark is not particularly interested in the conversation itself.

But he is interested in telling us, that such a reaction—like Peter's so understandable and actually acceptable reaction, is way out of place **HERE**.

Yes, Peter understood that Jesus is the Messiah. No doubts about that.

But he is just afraid of losing his friend, his dear friend with whom he has been travelling for a long time, with whom he has experienced so many special, wonderful, divine moments.

∴ FIVE ∴

And obviously this situation is really challenging for Jesus, it is a real temptation for him.

Could that be an option—to continue the travelling, the healing, the liberating of the suffering?

It must be a challenge to Jesus, why else would he be so harsh, rebuking Peter openly, saying:

Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Mark 8:33b

Jesus uses the same word that he used when he was tested by the devil: You *Satan*, you adversary, you counterplayer, get lost...

But stop, here Jesus does not say, “away with you”. He says, “get behind me”.

There you are, Peter. You wanted the best, now you got a slap in the face.

But Jesus had to make sure that not even friendship and his divine mission among the living will interfere with his mission that is even larger than his own life.

He must give his life for the sake of the Gospel—

... the good news that life will prevail and not death,

... the good news that God is a loving and forgiving God who leads his beloved to eternal life.

So, Peter, you had to learn a lesson.

Do not interfere with Jesus' mission.

For the sake of the Gospel get *behind* Jesus.

Because there are things which are larger than one's own life.

∴ SIX ∴

And this now is spoken right to us, to me, to you...

There are things which are larger than our own lives.

For the sake of the Gospel, it may be necessary to GIVE your own life.

Now, I can HEAR the “huh?s” and “what?s” in the room.

Indeed, Marks words might have been written in a time where it could have meant to actually put one’s life at risk when you openly confessed your Christian believe.

But this is not all—or the only way to understand this.

Jesus says:

For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

Mark 8:35

::: SEVEN :::

The different version is:

You might have a plan for your life.

You might be hooked by what people tell you is important in life: ...

... a glowing career,
 success,
 richness,
 influence,
 the pursuit of all your dreams,
 fancy holiday locations, ...

Your life, your desires, your dreams, ...

But for the followers of Christ there it might be necessary to step back, to give up this life for the sake of him, for the sake of the Gospel.

So, it might be—maybe today, maybe tomorrow, maybe later that you will hear his voice saying:

“I need you”, “I need your life” for me, for the Gospel. I need you to change your walk of life, your pursued path for the sake of the Gospel.

I need you to step in for others, I need you to speak my word, I need you to help others in need, I need you as my worker and my messenger, with your whole life.

So, be ready for a change of life, when you are following Christ. Followers of Christ are called to change their lives, to give their lives so that others can hear the Gospel and find an everlasting life in Christ.

::: Amen.

ⁱ Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum um Graefe*, 28th Edition. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Mk 8:32.

ⁱⁱ Walter Bauer, ed. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Frühchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 614.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Mk 8:27–29.