

The Story of Jesus

Part 20: How do we know which version of Jesus to follow?

Mark 8:22-9:1 - [watch online](#)

Summary:

How we view Jesus shapes how we follow Jesus. But how do we know which version of Jesus we should follow? And who gets to decide which version is the true version?

Main Ideas:

[01:25] We all put our preconceived ideas onto Jesus.

[02:06] How we view Jesus shapes how we follow Jesus.

[04:43] Like every relationship, knowing the real Jesus takes time.

[06:31] Liking Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus.

[10:00] Jesus refuses to fit the mold we try to force him into.

[11:36] When we try to use Jesus to fight for our agenda we usually end up fighting against God's agenda

[13:39] All Jesus asks for is all of us.

[15:10] Winning in the kingdom of God is defined by how much we lose for others.

[17:46] If we want to enjoy the kingdom we have to follow the way of the King.

[19:53] Following Jesus is a journey of discovering who he really is and aligning ourselves more and more to that image.

[20:23] We discover real life when we discover and follow the real Jesus.

Invitation:

[18:01] Memorize 1 John 4:19

[18:16] Pray: Help me discover the real you and not some made up image of you.

[18:29] Allow the real Jesus to guide your real life.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the main ideas stood out most to you and why?
2. In what ways do we try to mold Jesus into our own image or expectations rather than accepting him as he is?
3. Reread Mark 8:34-38. How does Jesus' call to "take up your cross" resonate with you? Do you find it challenging to accept his message of victory through surrender and service rather than through power and dominance?
4. What practices or habits could we implement to help us let go of our own agendas and embrace Jesus' mission of love and service?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

IN: So... you're interested in Jesus?

- Want to know who he was, what was he all about?
- And maybe it'll have some positive influence on your life in some way

You've come to the right spot... I hope

But how would you know? How do we know who Jesus really is?

How do we know whose version of Jesus is correct?

It's true... You can know the real Jesus.

You can have the real Jesus make a huge impact for good on your life and the lives of others.

But we have to be willing to see him for who he really is... so let's talk about it together.

WE: Almost everyone would agree... If more people were like Jesus the world would be a better place.

But what do we really mean when we say "be like Jesus"?

A really nice person / loving teacher / truth giver / religious leader / revolutionary?

What we're usually talking about is...

- The Jesus who thinks/acts like we do.
- Who agrees with what we agree with and is against what we are against...
- And if more people were like that Jesus the world would be a better place right?

We all put our preconceived ideas onto Jesus.

"I follow Jesus"... has a lot of different connotations/meanings to a lot of different people.

So who is the real Jesus? Who even gets to decide who the real Jesus is?

And then... How do we know we are following the real Jesus?

This whole thing has caused misunderstandings, division, and even war for hundreds of years.

- Even arguments over football game commercials

But if we take Jesus at his own words, we can discover who he really is and in doing so we can discover what it really means to follow him...

How we view Jesus shapes how we follow Jesus.

GOD: An ancient writer named Mark compiled for us what is most likely the Apostle Peter's eyewitness story of his time with Jesus.

And in 1st part of story Mark tries to get his readers to ask for ourselves, "Who is Jesus?"

And at a critical turning point in the story he shows us what our questions inevitably lead to.

- But he starts it off with a really unique and interesting encounter...

Mark 8:22-26 Weird I know... Spit... believed to have healing abilities... Jesus just using the accepted cultural norms of the time...

- like stethoscope around neck.

And not working right away at first? Was Jesus having an off day?

There's a lot more going on here and Mark puts this story here to make a very important point.

1st- This healing is one more clue Mark is giving us about the identity of Jesus...

- He's assuming his readers' have in mind the Jewish scriptures about healing the blind...

- **Isaiah 35:4-6**

- **Isaiah 29:18**

Without just bluntly saying it... Mark is showing that God himself has come to heal and love and restore... but as we're about to see...

Just as this man didn't have perfectly clear sight right away... people don't usually clearly see who Jesus is at first...

Like every relationship, knowing the real Jesus takes time.

So Mark uses this story as an intro to what happens next... **Mark 8:27-30**

Villages outside of Caesarea Philippi in countryside... much less Jewish population.

City was like a Roman Resort town with a new temple to a new Roman god... the Son of the god... Caesar.

And maybe while overlooking this symbol of Roman power and civil religion... Jesus asks...

- After all that's happened, what I've done/taught, what do people say about me?
- What label/category have they put me in?

And it seems the people liked him b/c it was clear Jesus was no ordinary teacher/rabbi...

- He wasn't just a healer and he wasn't just a prophet...

He was one of THE prophets... In direct line w/ the major prophets. Whom God sent to redirect Israel back to himself.

And in a sense he was. He was the spokesman of God that all other spokesmen had pointed to throughout Israel's history... but that wasn't the full picture.

Liking Jesus is not the same as knowing Jesus.

And the disciples have been on the inside of Jesus' ministry, heard his explanations of the parables, seen things no one else had seen...

So Jesus puts the question to them... What do you guys say?

Peter, spokesman for group, says, "You are the Messiah."

- The Chosen One of God who will bring the Kingdom of God to earth
- Defeating evil and setting things back the way they were meant to be.

Wow! Peter seems to get it... in the other accounts Jesus even says, "Great job Peter God gave you this insight."

But what do they mean by the Messiah? Is it the same meaning Jesus puts to it?

As we're about to see they have something other in mind than Jesus does...

In the typical Jewish mind the Messiah was the true King of the Jews... he was going to be a political and military leader and a renewer/purifier of their religion.

He would conquer Israel's enemies (Romans) with force and remove the religious leaders who had lost sight of God's heart and restore the glory and purity of Israel.

Which as we'll see is very different from what Jesus has in mind...

So he says... Don't tell anyone yet ... it's not what you think.

- Don't declare it publicly... it'll have some pretty big repercussions.
- You think it means revolution... others will think that too... so keep it chill

And he says, "Listen boys, you're right about the Messiah thing but here's what that really means..."

V. 31 Jesus- "You want to win. You want me to restore the physical nation of Israel, conquer your enemies, and set up a new dynasty."

But... I'm going to lose. I'll be rejected by all those in power, I'm going to suffer, I'm going to die.

But in losing I will win.

- Just as the prophet Isaiah said [Isaiah 53]... I will suffer and die, but I will then live and bring true freedom.
- This is what it means for me to be the Messiah

Victory through defeat. Winning by giving up and serving. Life through death.

You want a conquering king... by force.

Nope going to happen through losing, giving, dying, loving

God's power won't be used to overthrow kingdoms but to overthrow evil and establish his kingdom in the hearts of his people.

Jesus refuses to fit the mold we try to force him into.

And just as the blind man couldn't see things clearly at first... the disciples couldn't grasp what Jesus was talking about...

Disciples: This isn't how it's supposed to go... Messiahs don't die. A dead Messiah is a false Messiah

V. 32-33 Rough... but this has been God's plan to restore humanity to himself from before the beginning of time.

So anything that would attempt to take Jesus off this path is not from God but from the Accuser... the Satan.

- The one who helped bring in this chaos/separation in the first place.

Disciples wanted Jesus to fit their idea of a Messiah... a figure that would actually be the opposite of Jesus' true divine mission.

- To sacrifice himself for the good of all of humanity.

If he did what the disciples wanted him to do all of humankind would stay enslaved to sin.

Their view was too small, limited only to what they could see, what they thought was important...

- Couldn't see things from God's true perspective.

When we try to use Jesus to fight for our agenda we usually end up fighting against God's agenda

We have to be willing to let Jesus be who he is especially when it challenges who we think he should be/who we want him to be.

So Jesus says... I will win by losing and if you want to really follow me... if you really want me to be your king... you're going to have to do the same thing...

V. 34-9:1 The imagery is shockingly offensive. The people Jesus is talking to didn't have some romanticized religious idea of crosses...

- They had seen people literally take up their crosses and be horribly tortured and crucified by the Romans.

This isn't some artistic hyperbole...

Jesus is saying... I'm going to give up my life to bring in the KoG and if you're going to be part of it you're going have to give up your life as well.

Not only does Jesus see himself as bringing God's Kingdom to earth but he's setting himself up as the King.

- "Give up your life for my sake" So insanely arrogant unless he really is the King, God and knows that even giving up our lives will bring us what we truly need.

All Jesus asks for is all of us.

He says... What the world sees as shameful... choosing to lose by giving up our own rights, giving up our own agendas, living the way of love and peace and acceptance... living out the Good News of God... is what will bring true victory, will make you my true follower, and give you true life.

I'm bringing something better than winning... I'm bringing true life that you can never lose. Now and forever.

And that loss whether it is actually our physical lives, or our possessions, or our reputation, or whatever we once defined as winning will seem like nothing compared to what we will actually gain...

Like trading old ratty smelly torn clothes for new fine indestructible clothes.

It's trading the burden/weight of fighting for ourselves, worrying about our rights,

- It's trading the need of making sure things are even, that the wrongs done to us are repaid...
- It's trading a life of anger, bitterness, worry...

For a life of trust, hope, peace... knowing that we don't have to fight b/c the King sees us and knows us and true justice will be done.

We don't have to prove our worth b/c he has already proven it by dying for us.

We are free to love b/c we know we are loved... we can accept b/c we've been accepted

We can serve b/c we've been served.

Winning in the kingdom of God is defined by how much we lose for others.

And for most of the disciples they will lose their life, some will literally carry crosses to their death for the King and his Good News.

- There is a God who loves everyone and wants to show them how loved they are. He died and rose again to prove his love and give true life now and forever.
- They will do it for him and for those that need to hear the Good News b/c they watched him do it for them.

But Jesus reassures them... Don't worry most of you will live long enough to see the kingdom you will die for...

When after his resurrection the HS comes, fills his people, and lives begin to change and the unstoppable kingdom of God invades the world.

Of course they guys still didn't understand. It took Jesus rising from the dead and the HS actually filling them to fully grasp who Jesus is and what his kingdom really is like.

YOU: And that is how it is for all of us... we have an idea of who Jesus is. We like the idea of love... at least the idea that he loves us.

- We believe he is for what we are for and against what we are against
- And anyone who doesn't fit OUR criteria is obviously against Jesus
- We dehumanize and justify all kinds of hatred in the name of a Messiah we have created in our own image.

We become more and more burdened worried that those out there are fighting against us/Jesus

- We start fighting for and clinging to power

- We start arguing making sure everyone believes the way we do
- We forget about loving and serving and focus only on winning

We want to follow the Jesus that already agrees with us... so we don't have to change anything.

But we are following a fuzzy image of the true Jesus tainted by what we WANT Jesus to be.

Jesus doesn't fit nicely in our little boxes, he didn't come to earth, die, and rise again just so we could win our little power struggles or conquer those we see as our enemies.

He came to rule in peace and love. And he invites us to join him in his kingdom and join his mission of restoring humanity back to their place with him.

But **If we want to enjoy the kingdom we have to follow the way of the King.**

So what do we do?

Remember... How we view Jesus shapes how we view/envision following him.

Memorize: 1 John 4:19

Pray: Help me discover the real you and not some made up image of you.

- Allow him to change your view of him

Allow the real Jesus to guide your real life.

If we say Jesus was a good teacher... then maybe we take some advice on how to have a better life.

If we say he was a prophet who showed us a bit of what God is like... then we can use his example and teachings for some good motivations to be nice to people.

If we say he came to make a Christian nation... then we will always be looking for enemies, fighting, and be afraid of losing.

But... If we say Jesus is God/He is my King...I follow Jesus... then there are some really big implications...

- It means we aren't in it to win it
- We don't fight for our own way/agendas, we don't fight to save our physical lives or what we have built our lives around
- We give it all up for our King and for living out his Good News.

It changes everything...

- How use money / Time / Resources
- How parent/marriage/work/date
- School/friends/neighbor/put cart back at grocery store.
- What we dwell on, become passionate about
- How much power worry has over us

Following Jesus is a journey of discovering who he really is and aligning ourselves more and more to that image.

WE: Jesus invites all of us to win by choosing to lose.

To let go of the burdens of what we think is important and discover true life.

To discover a life free from what we're told is important.

A life full of what really matters... love, joy, peace, relationship

A life full of purpose and meaning. A life that matters for eternity.

But to find it we have to discover the real Jesus and align our real lives to his.

We discover real life when we discover and follow the real Jesus.