Jesus the King
Life Group Study Guide
Week of March 1st
Chapter 9 - “The Turn”
Mark 8:27-9:1

Introduction
As we said last week, the first half of Mark’s gospel tells us much about the person of Jesus, but leaves us with unanswered questions about the work of Jesus — i.e. how he will be bringing salvation and the kingdom. For example: a) In Mark 6 Jesus says he will be rejected, and that it is his lot to be rejected. Why? Does that mean he will fail? Why would it be part of God’s plan for his king to be rejected? b) In Mark 7 Jesus presents teaching about sin that is surprisingly radical. Sin is something deeply rooted in all of us, not just in those who are ‘enemies of the faith’. Yet he continually indicates that he will receive us by grace, anyway. How can that be? What will he do about sin? c) Also, in the first half of the book the disciples are repeatedly portrayed as failing to understand the nature of Jesus’ work and power. As soon as Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ, the focus changes and Jesus immediately begins to answer these questions by (for the first time) talking about the cross. The entire second half of the book focuses on that — the crucified Messiah. It is all about why the cross was necessary and what it accomplished.

The book of Mark divides into two sections of roughly 8 chapters each. The first half begins with a summary of Jesus’ “first half” message – “The kingdom of God is near!” (Mark 1:14-15.) This leads up to Peter’s confession in 8:29 “You are the Christ.” Now the second half begins with a summary statement of Jesus’ “second half” message in Mark 8:31-38. And it will climax with the centurion’s confession at the cross in 15:29 – “Surely this man was the Son of God.” Now that Jesus is revealing more explicit details about his mission, he also reveals more explicit details about what it means to follow him. In the first half, he told people to follow him (1:17-18, 20; 2:14-15), but now he begins to explain what that following entails. As Jesus takes up a cross, we must also. As the cross and glory are linked in Jesus’ life, so the cross and glory will be linked in our lives. That is the surprising theme that is introduced to us in the second half of Mark, beginning here.

Discussion Questions

1. Read verses 31-32. In light of the teaching of entire first half of the gospel of Mark, how are these verses completely unexpected, even (apparently) contradictory to it?

2. In verse 31, the word must modifies and controls the entire sentence. What does it tell us about Jesus’ purpose and what he came to do?

3. Read verses 32-33. Why is Peter rebuked, and how is Peter a warning for us today?
4. In verse 35, what does the first “save his life” mean (35a)? What does the first “lose his life” mean (35b)? What does the second “lose his life” mean (35a)? What does the second “save his life” mean (35b)?

5. How do verses 34 and 36 shed light on what verse 35 means?

6. Read verse 9:1. In what way might some of those present see the kingdom of God come with power before they die?

7. There is a strange mixture of strength and weakness in Christianity. How does Jesus show this strange mixture in his mission? How do we see this strange mixture in Peter in verses 32-33? How do we see this strange mixture in the life Jesus calls us to in verses 34-37?

8. How can we follow Jesus’ example of weakness?

Summary

Who Jesus is: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant.

Why Jesus Came: He will reign in power, but he must suffer and die.

How should I respond? To follow Jesus means to follow the Suffering Servant. To truly follow, we must openly acknowledging him and all his words. Inseparable from following Jesus is the cost of the cross. There is no other example He gives.

More notes on the concept of self-denial: Self-denial is not self-hatred. Self-hatred is still in reality a form of self-centeredness — you are absorbed in your own problems, and your attention and focus are dominated by your flaws and failures. Self-denial is rather self-forgetfulness. For example: it means that when you approach God, a Christian focuses on Jesus’ record, not your own, as a basis for your requests. On the other hand, when you decide how to use your money, a Christian focuses on Jesus’ concerns and desires, not your own. And so on. It also means a condition in which you are not very concerned with whether or not you are being snubbed, given proper respect, and so on. Self-forgetfulness is a lack of touchiness.

“Take up his cross” in v. 34, probably means the same thing as “to deny himself” and “to lose his life.” But perhaps the metaphor shows that the principle of self-will and self-determination will die a slow death. Crucifixion is a slow death, and it must be done daily.