

JESUS TOLD THEM ABOUT THE MEANING OF HIS DEATH

Mark 8:31-38

Key Verse: 8:31

"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."

Last Sunday we mainly thought about the confession of faith. We learned that there are two kinds of confessions of faith. First is the confession of faith out of one's consciousness. Second is the confession of faith out of one's subconsciousness. Those who live with a confession of faith from their consciousness are always fearful and calculative and fatalistic. As a result, they are nothing but slaves of egoism. But when a person has a confession of faith from his subconsciousness, his life is God's; God rules his heart and God gives him the peace of God which is different from that of the world. God gives him eternal life. God gives him the promise of everlasting inheritance in God's house. So his life is happy all the time. He does not think of the things of the world. He thinks of the things of God's world. Nobody can take away the happiness in his soul. Nobody can take away his everlasting inheritance in his faith. Therefore, we must study the Bible constantly until we can confess that Jesus is the Christ in [our subconscious](#) world. In today's passage, Jesus mainly talks about the meaning of his death. Those who have the true meaning of Jesus' death on the cross know God's love and Jesus' grace and the work of the [Holy Spirit](#). May we think about the meaning of Jesus' death for a while.

I. The meaning of Jesus' death (31)

Look at verse 31. "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again." Up until now, Jesus helped his disciples realize that he is the Son of God. In other words, Jesus taught them who he was. From now on, Jesus teaches them what he does. It is that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and the teachers of the law and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. Jesus plainly told his disciples about his suffering and death on the cross. The disciples were greatly surprised at his words. We are also surprised, wondering why the Son of God had to die on the cross like a condemned criminal.

It is God's way of world salvation. When man sinned against God, God was endlessly sorrowful. God's big heart was full of grief. Out of his divine righteousness, he could have thrown all mankind away like a garbage collector picks up the garbage and puts it into the garbage truck. Because of man's sin, God's heart was broken and man lost paradise. Man who lost paradise had to live in curse and endless suffering and assaulting fear. But God, out of his great mercy, made a plan for world salvation. That plan is primitively revealed in Genesis 3:15. It says, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." It was more precisely annunciated in Isaiah 9:6. It says, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government

will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, [Prince of Peace](#)." Again it is annunciated in Isaiah 11:1. It says, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." This verse explains that from the descendants of David's family, Jesus would come to this world.

Jesus' coming to this world sounds easy. But he is the Son of God. He is the one and only Son of God. So from God's point of view, to send his one and only Son to the world to save men from their sins was not easy at all. Not only God, his eminent servants cried out, "Why should it be that the one and only Son of God should come to this world in a human form?" Isaiah 53:1 says, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" If it is paraphrased, this verse is Isaiah's sorrowful crying. Isaiah did not know God's plan that his one and only Son had to be sent to the world. To Isaiah, it was very ridiculous for God to send his one and only Son to the world to save sinners from their sins. At that time, it was heard as "word of mouth" news. Still, it was very hard for him to understand how the Son of God could be sent to this world. When he thought about the Son of God who was coming to this world, he could not but cry out, saying, "Why? Why?" It is too sorrowful to hear, and it is too sacrificial an event; in this world, nobody could imagine it. So Isaiah revealed his coming to this world, his suffering and his death progressively in Isaiah 53. There was another eminent prophet. He was John the Baptist. He came to this world and suffered much to fulfill his mission as the forerunner of the coming Messiah Jesus. Finally, Jesus the Messiah came to this world and appeared in order to begin the earthly messianic ministry. John the Baptist knew what Jesus wanted to do. But he shuddered to look at Jesus. John 1:35-36 say: "The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'" John's disciples only had a sense of competition and sense of defeat toward Jesus' disciples. But John said to his disciples, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Here, "Lamb of God" meant sacrifice offering. The people of Israel went up to Jerusalem every year at the Passover to offer the paschal lamb for the sake of their forgiveness and God's blessing. In Bible narrative, once Jesus also went to the Jerusalem temple at the Passover and studied the Bible with the highly scholarly priests when he was twelve years old (Lk 2:42). The Lamb of God signified the Paschal Lamb. When John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God," he meant, "Look, Jesus the Son of God who would be the Paschal Lamb and shed his blood on the cross after much suffering and taking up all our iniquities and transgressions." John pictured Jesus' future crucifixion on the cross and his death. He cried loudly, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" It was God's plan. It was God's hope for world salvation. It was God's love to sacrifice his one and only Son to die on the cross so that his death as the Paschal Lamb would liberate mankind from their bondage of sins. When John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," he knew the heart of God. But his sorrow was unbearable all by himself.

When we study history, we find that the atheist country Greece had the most gods. Their names are too many to count. Almost every person had his own god. The Roman Empire was once a world power nation. They imitated Greek culture and had so many gods. For example, there was the god Janus. Later, this name of a god became the root for

"January." "Janus" means "the open mouths," especially the palate. Janus had also two faces. One face represents "the way in," the direction toward the gullet and the other represents "the way out," the direction toward the teeth. At that time, a small minority of people had a free way out and way in. But ordinary people did not have freedom of coming in and going out. So many people believed in this god. There was another god, Fortuna Barbata. She was the goddess who was worshiped if one wanted to have a flowing and beautiful beard. But many supplicants found that she could not give them a beard, even an ugly one. There was another god, "Mercury," who gave the power of speech. It was because in that time the power of speech was most important. Augustine was well-educated. Later he became a speech professor at Rome for the Senator candidates. This is the reason people worshiped the god Mercury, in order to be a man of standing with his good speech. Among the gods, Jupiter was the god of Rome. At that time, Roman upper class people believed that Jupiter was the King of the gods who had the power to cause anything that comes into the world. When the empire's power was consolidated, they indiscriminately called the Emperor the god Jupiter.

We thought about a few gods in Rome. At that time, Rome was the only world power nation. They had hundreds of well-trained mighty army divisions. They had wealth and lived overly luxurious lives. But they were not happy in their hearts; they were extremely fearful all the time. It is easy to understand why they were fearful all the time. There is a man who has ten million dollars. But he is now 78 years old. So he deposited his money in a bank which the nation guarantees, even though its interest is a mere one-third compared with ordinary banks. Romans, especially Roman high-class people, were very fearful because there were endless power struggles and they felt emptiness in their souls. They needed the true God. They needed the Son of God. Finally, at the time of Emperor Constantine, they accepted the Christian God as their national God. Even though their country was ruined due to barbarians' constant attacks, people's lives were happier and easier when they had the Son of God in their hearts. Soon the Catholic Church ruled and overruled not only Rome, but all of the kings of European countries with the title, "Vicar of Christ." The Catholic high priests became very deceptive when they blessed people. They declared to the nations that those who were not baptized at birth were not men or women, but children of the devil. Even kings who were not ordained by the Church were not kings, but leaders of barbarians. In this way, the Church rose to power, ruled and overruled, and abused its power, until that power was destroyed.

Human beings are made in God's image and from clumps of dust. Therefore, without God people cannot live in this world with peace. Rather, the people of the only superpower nation as well as the people of barbarian nations want to worship the true God and have peace in their souls.

God, out of his great mercy, sent his Son as incarnate God who is full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14). It is the amazing grace of God. In addition, God was willing to crucify his one and only Son on the cross to forgive men's sins and to give them eternal life and an everlasting inheritance in God's house. This is truly amazing. Therefore, the coming of Jesus to the world to live among us for a while is truly good news of great joy. Those who know Jesus' coming and Jesus' death on the cross can overcome the world. When we are living in this real

world, we see many things. We confront many events. Sometimes we suffer loss. Sometimes we are slandered and accused. Sometimes we are unjustly misjudged and abandoned. But when we think about Jesus who died on the cross, everything else disappears from our hearts and we can maintain the peace of God in our souls.

Jesus' death on the cross made even nature sorrowful. When he was crucified on the cross and was in between two robbers, people shouted, "Save yourself. Come down from the cross. We say, 'Come down and save yourself'" (Lk 23:35). But Jesus did not come down from the cross. He bore all the pains and iniquities and transgressions and rebellion against God on the cross. Finally he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). As soon as Jesus breathed his last, darkness came over all the land. It was because such a big and generous sun who gives light to the good and evil became sorrowful at the death of Jesus. So he closed his eyes and shed many tears. Then the world became darkened. The earth shook and the rocks, in their sorrow, rolled around and split. The forests in the mountain shook violently and rain poured down from above. In other words, the death of Jesus was a sorrowful event even to nature. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51). The curtain of the temple meant the place of separation between God and men. Through Jesus' death on the cross as the Lamb of God the curtain of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. In other words, from that time on, man can come to God through Jesus freely without paying taxes to the priests.

In the nineteenth century in Wales there was a tradition in the country. If a person had two sons, one had to be dedicated as a priest. If one had two daughters, one had to be dedicated as a nun in the service of God. Not only Wales, but all the European countries worshiped God through his Son Jesus Christ. We see beautiful scenes of abbeys and the nuns' chorus during the morning mass. But these days we can scarcely see nuns or nun candidates. We must pray that many nuns and priests would dedicate themselves fully to God. Throughout history, after Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection, so many dedicated believers were happy to die for his name's sake. The early Christians were happy for a short time after Jesus' death and resurrection through their common life together and through Bible study and prayer. But through persecution they were all scattered throughout the world. They thought that when they believed in Jesus they would be happy. But contrary to their thought, fiery persecution fell upon them. It came from Jewish leaders because the Christians did not keep their traditions. In addition, persecution came from the Roman Empire because Christians did not worship Jupiter. Because of persecution, Christians had to scatter, losing their houses and family members. They became aliens and were scattered all over the world of those times. They scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia and Rome, which were known as the world of that time. It was not for the sake of suffering. It was for the sake of God's world mission purpose. Christian life is to go out and preach the gospel. Christians must not settle down and only enjoy their family lives.

Finally Peter and Paul came to Rome. They found there were already several thousand Jews who ran away from their countries to make money and to live comfortably. They were mostly money-oriented people. They did not want to believe in the Son of God. Paul made so many appointments with the Jewish immigrants for Bible study. Some of

them came reluctantly. But most of them did not come. So he preached the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection to the prison guards. Once Paul was very ambitious. He was a man of will power. He wanted to be somebody in the Jewish community. So he became the ringleader of eradicating the early Christians. But now he was a prisoner of Jesus because he knew the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. Peter also tried to be active in gospel ministry. But he did not know what to do. Anyway, he finished his life gloriously. He was arrested by the Roman army. He was supposed to be crucified. He petitioned that he may be crucified upside down because he did not deserve to be crucified in the way his Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. From Paul and Peter's time martyrdom was known as glorious. Many Christians knew the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection and they were ready to die for the name of Jesus Christ. There is a story about Polycarp. He was over 80 years old. He was a well-to-do man in his community. He accepted Jesus Christ. Then the Pharisees and people from Roman authority came and arrested him. They accused him as a criminal because of the name of Jesus. But they gave him an offer, "If you deny his name just once, we will set you free." But he answered, "Our Lord Jesus Christ never betrayed me. How can I betray my Lord?" So he was burned at the stake. Not only Polycarp, there were so many of those who had martyrdom spirit. In order to conquer the Roman Empire, they lived in the underground tombs called catacombs. It is indeed surprising that those who know the meaning of Jesus' death are so powerful and full of joy in their souls. Let's focus all our thoughts and acts on the cross of Jesus, who became the Lamb of God to save us from our sins and give us eternal life and everlasting inheritance in God's house. If we do not know the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, we are spiritually blind men. We do not know what sin is. We do not know what God's love is. We do not know what the grace of Jesus is. We do not know what man is. We do not know what happiness man can enjoy. May God richly bless you and let you know the meaning of the death of Jesus when you continually study the Bible and give your heart to know the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross.

II. The things of God and the things of men (32-34)

As soon as Jesus mentioned his death as the Lamb of God, Peter thought it was ridiculous. So he strongly urged Jesus not to die, but rather to satisfy Peter's human dream to become Prime Minister of an earthly messianic kingdom he thought Jesus would establish. Looking at his disciples, Jesus told Peter, "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (33). Jesus understood Peter very well. To have the things of men is not necessarily bad. It is good to have the things of the world to some extent. But it is not good for the things of the world to fully occupy one's heart. It is not good if he is gripped tightly by the attachment of the things of the world. Then he cannot have eternal life. He only has physical life. He always experiences limitation in his thought world. He is limited in his physical body. He is even limited in his effort-making. Finally he becomes a very fatalistic man.

Not only do we have the things of the world, we must ultimately have the things of God. Why is it so? If we don't have the things of God, we become like the Roman Emperor Nero. He had everything. But he was empty. So he set fire in the middle part of Rome and lied that Christians set the fire. Finally Christians were accused of arson and beaten up and punished to death. Nero's worldly glory was somewhat

glorious when he had everything of the world. But his inner man was one who had no eternal life in himself. Those who have no eternal life are like a tiger or bear in the jungle. We must have things of God. In the 200 Olympics in Sydney, Australia, in six divisions of boxing matches no American won a gold medal. In total, two American boxers received silver medals. It is ironic that in boxing there was no gold medal at all for America. In order to be a boxer, one has to get up at 4:00 a.m. every day and go jogging for seven and a half miles. And after that, he eats breakfast. Around 10:00 a.m. he does routine exercises for two hours. And then he can have sparring with his partner. Without this kind of effort, one cannot win a gold medal at the Olympics. In the same way, in order to receive the things of God, we must strive hard. There was a man who discovered a treasure hidden in a field. When he found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field (Mt 13:44). When we are going to have the things of God we must sell everything and give it to the poor and follow Jesus (Mk 10:21). But those who have no spiritual eyes cannot do this treasure-hunting work. So Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and taught them how to get things of God. Look at verse 34. "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" First of all, they must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him. We can sometimes take up our cross and follow him. But it is very hard for us to deny ourselves. It is because our ego is greater than a mountain. This ego does not allow us to deny ourselves. Because of our egos we become self-righteous and we can never deny ourselves, but claim to be righteous. One elder was asked to pray at the end of an orchestra concert. He was asked to pray for two minutes. But he began to speak about his very ugly life story, his egocentricity and his younger brother's steadfastness. Thus he wasted 35 minutes. As a result, the orchestra concert mood was all gone and people became grumpy. He was rebuked by his younger brother. One who knows how to deny himself is mightier than the general who conquers ten castles (Pr 16:32).

How can we deny ourselves? We must have divine discipline to learn to be "slow and steady" for quite a time. This generation is pragmatic and individualistic. Therefore, each one is self-centered and self-righteous. They do not know how to deny themselves. But we must learn from Jesus how he denied himself and renounced the heavenly glory, honor and power of his kingdom, and how he came down to be born in a stable of an animal and was laid in a manger. Jesus is the Son of God. But he did not come down from the cross to save himself even though people scorned him for not saving himself when he had saved others. It was to obey God's will for him as the Lamb of God for the whole world. He denied himself and was crucified on the cross. If we are going to deny ourselves, we need this much effort. One who can deny himself can conquer the world as Jesus denied himself and became King of kings and Lord of lords. One who denies himself can please God as our Lord Jesus Christ pleased God.

III. The Son of Man will be ashamed of him (35-38)

We really honor Jesus the Son of God as the Son of God. But strictly speaking, we often treat him like our friend or servant. But if we are not to be ashamed before Jesus the Son of God we must commit our lives to his hand. Look at verse 35. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save

it." This verse emphasizes self-denial. Those who love the things of the world cannot have eternal life. Therefore, we must know that life is very precious. Of course, we think our lives are very precious. But in reality, many people think of their lives randomly. The way of having eternal life is to lose one's life for the glory of God. Then God will give him eternal life. I want to ask you, "Does anybody want to die at this moment?" I think nobody wants to die. Everybody knows that his or her life is the most important. Therefore, we must not have only a mortal body. We must have eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ by his blood on the cross. Let's read verse 36. "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" It is very plain talk. But in fact, there is a very serious truth in Jesus' words.

Who is ashamed before Jesus our Lord? They are those who do not know the meaning of the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God. They are those who did not deny themselves and accept the word of life in their hearts. They are those who only loved the things of the world in this adulterous and sinful generation. The Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory and with his holy angels. So many people live in this world. But even an ordinary person wants honor. So they study hard overcoming their headaches. How much more one should do so to attain the Father's glory and holy angels' welcoming. Those who are ashamed of Jesus the Son of God will be shamed and never get a taste of honor and glory in this world or in the kingdom of God.

Today we thought about the meaning of Jesus' death. We must come to know the meaning of Jesus' death from our deep hearts. Otherwise our life of faith is very superficial and there is no happiness in our souls. In order to know the meaning of the death of Jesus we must deny ourselves and follow his footstep. May God bless you with life that is full and give you abundant happiness in your soul when you follow Jesus. May God bless you.