

“A Kingdom Secret”, #2

The Ides of March: a good day to think about matters of life and death.

The third Sunday on “the (secret) kingdom of God”: the second of three actual secrets we will look at. A story in three parts, each part centred on a question, two of which we have already seen.

The first question is raised by Jesus himself.

Mark 8:27-30 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

So first: **PART 1: QUESTION 1: Who is he?** (The issue of authority: He is the Son of God)

He raises the question. They answer (correctly). He urges them to secrecy.

And then: **PART 2: QUESTION 2: What is he doing?** (The issue: mission: “bring the kingdom to earth”)

This time, he answers the “mission question” in terms of personal cost to him. **Mark 8:31** And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

This is the first time they were told this. (There would be two more times: **9:30-32** and **10:32-34**.)

And what happens then? Peter rebukes Jesus! And Jesus rebukes him right back: **Mark 8:32-33** And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

And then... **PART 3:** (If this is what his mission costs HIM,) **QUESTION 3: What does his mission cost us?**

He gathers a crowd for this. And then here is his answer. **Mark 8:34** And he called to him the crowd with his disciples and said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

First mention of the word “cross.” (A clue to HOW he would be killed!)

The answer to this 3rd question provides us with our three applications today.

ACTION: **What does the mission cost the rest of us?** (“The Cost of Discipleship”)

a) Live out a “No” to yourself, whatever the cost

➔ This might (not) be a case of saying “No” to a sinful impulse. As if you are the parent of a house full of unruly brats. But it might be saying “No” to a morally neutral desire.

Or even a godly desire! Picture James and John with a plan for a discipleship training camp for fishermen.

In other words, the cost of your discipleship might be the loss of a godly dream.

ALSO: it might not be necessary to say, “No!” at all. How would you know that? By “Action b”

b) Live out a “Yes” to God, whatever “the cross” ➔ i.e. whatever the shame and pain and death

Whatever loss of reputation / pleasures and comforts / life (quantity and/or quality)

c) Live in deliberate obedience to Christ (“and imitation of” !)

So these 3 actions are the cost of the mission, to us ➔ To explain this cost, he reveals another secret of the kingdom. [Last week: “The road to greatness...”]

This week: **Mark 8:35** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

A KINGDOM SECRET: I will lose my life if I live to save it but I will save my life if I lose it living for Jesus .

What the secret reveals: Following Jesus is fatal but failing to follow Jesus is fatal too.

A commitment to Christ and his kingdom will cost you your life, but the alternative will cost you your life, as well.

In other words ➔ The call to follow Christ is a matter of life and death.

But think about it! → Being human is a matter of life and death!
The question of what you are going to live for is vitally linked to the question of what you are going to die of.

That's why Jim Elliott wrote in his journal:
"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose"

So what ARE you living for? And related to that: How ARE you planning to lose your life?

Then what happens? A related question: *What if following Christ DOES cost you "everything" (in the world)?*
Jesus asks: "Well, what if it does?" **Mark 8:36** For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?

In fact, "losing the world" should be a matter of "Good riddance!"
The world is a danger to us!

James 4:4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We are "the bride of Christ." Think like a wife (for a moment!)

We mustn't let ourselves get too fond of the world! It would be like getting too friendly with another woman's husband!

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. So don't let yourself fall in love!

And then? Putting the cost of discipleship in CONTEXT: (this matter of life and death.)
Mark 8:37 For what can a man give in return for his life?

Bottom line: The choice here is a highly personal thing: but not just personal to you. Personal to Jesus!

Mark 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Our terrible choice:
ashamed of Jesus now → shameful to Jesus then.

One more detail to notice: See how closely linked are Jesus and the good news about Jesus!

A KINGDOM SECRET: I will lose my life if I live to save it but I will save my life if I lose it living for Jesus and the gospel.

As in **Mark 1:15** "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
(When he could have said "Believe in me!" he said "Believe in the gospel.")

The commitment to follow Jesus, this commitment that will cost you your life and the world, is a commitment to the work of the gospel.