

day 1: (Mark 8:27-30) As Jesus and his disciples are walking along, Jesus decides to give them a little quiz. “Who do people say that I am”, he asks. But then, more personally, he asks, “Who do you say I am?” Jesus is testing their thinking. Are they still thinking as they used to, only about earthly things? Or are they beginning to think as Jesus thinks, about Kingdom things? Peter seems to get it right. Kingdom principles seem so clear to him for a moment. “You are the Christ”, he declares. What kind of thinking are you doing these days? Purely about the things of this life?

day 2: (Mark 8: 31-33) Without the context, this seems pretty harsh from Jesus. But is it really? Jesus has been teaching and healing with these men for a while now. He’s been declaring who he is and that God’s reality is more important than their preconceived notions and preferences. Now, clearly, Peter has drifted back into earthly thinking. He’s forgotten that God’s plans aren’t subject to human reason. He can’t see God’s plans because his own preferences are blocking the view. I find myself in Peter’s sandals from time to time, do you?

day 3: (Mark 8: 31-38) What does Jesus mean by “self-denial” and “cross-carrying”? Isn’t it clear? Maybe not? Me either, my mind still struggles to think Kingdom thoughts. Here is what Jesus means: He is telling us to wage battle against the tendency we all have to think just like everyone else. As Christians we must exert effort every day to train our minds on the things of God. And we must realize that the cross, though it looked like the end, was really the beginning of new and eternal life with God. We must learn and try every day to change the patterns of our thinking, then our behaviors can change.

day 4: (Mark 8: 35-38) If all of our striving to make ends meet and get ahead is all that there is to life, then what a pitiful existence we lead. Jesus is teaching us that it is our efforts in the things of God (like welcoming others, worshiping, growing and serving), that matter most. Whenever we try to pull back and focus inwardly, we are in danger of losing the very thing God sees as most important – our souls! You know how much time you spent working this week, but can you remember how much time you spent with God and doing the things of God?

day 5: (Mark 9:2-7) Jesus has been clearly demonstrating his humanity in Mark’s gospel. But here, Jesus decides to make his divinity known. In this demonstration of his power as God, Jesus re-assures his shaky followers. He sort of pulls back the veil on his divinity and they see him as God. With all of his admonitions to change, he now shows them how it is possible: through that mixture of human effort and God’s amazing power. In your life, which is supreme? Are you only trying or are you trying and relying on God’s power?

Next Step Power

Sunday, March 8, 2009

Mark 8: 27-9:7

First 2 Kingdom Principles:

1. God’s plans are not subject to human reason...
 2. Kingdom is the pre-immanent reality!
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- I. Jesus teaches –AGAIN
 - a. Explicitly lays it out for them
 - b. Self denial – doing battle against “reason is king” mentality is the struggle
 - c. Taking up the cross – “cross” a kind of code...
Accepting the upside down reality
 - d. Luke’s gospel adds the word “daily” in this story
 - II. Goal = maturity
 - a. Taking the next step in the right direction
 - b. Maturity – experience walking with God
 - c. We see the human part, Jesus gives it to us.
 - d. We strive for self denial and cross eyed living
 - e. Is there a God part?
 - III. God’s Part = Power
 - a. Human striving is never adequate
 - b. Jesus reveals his power in the Transfiguration
 - c. Been seeing humanity, now see my divinity, Peter
 - d. Kingdom Principle #3: “It is as important to rely on Jesus’ power for maturity and growth as it is for salvation!”
 - e. A confession of “I Need Thee Every Hour”