

“Set Your Mind on God’s Interests”  
(Mark 8:31-38)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week, we were reminded of a very important truth regarding our salvation:
  - a. Though we need to hear the Gospel before we can be saved,
  - b. From another person – from someone who knows it (usually a believer),
  - c. That by itself isn’t enough – the Father has to reveal His Son to us.
  
2. When Jesus asked what others thought of Him,
  - a. And the disciples told Him,
    - (i) He then asked what they thought,
    - (ii) And Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
    - (iii) Jesus told Peter that he was blessed, because, “Flesh and blood (man) did not reveal that to him, but My Father who is in heaven.”
    - (iv) The Gospel becomes the power of God to save,
      - (a) When God empowers it by His Holy Spirit.
      - (b) Without His work, it can’t save, but only increase condemnation – because they’ve heard it but haven’t responded.
  - b. You need to remember that if you haven’t yet received Jesus as your Lord and Savior.
    - (i) Hearing that He is from someone isn’t enough.
    - (ii) Knowing that He is these things, isn’t enough.
    - (iii) Believing that He is, isn’t enough.
    - (iv) The Spirit must make you alive – He must open your eyes spiritually – if you are to trust Jesus in the way that saves.
    - (v) If He hasn’t, you need to pray that He would.
  - c. And we all need to remember to apply this as we go out to evangelize.
    - (i) Telling others about the Gospel isn’t enough.
    - (ii) The Spirit needs to be at work.
      - (a) And so we need to pray that He would work.
      - (b) We also need to be assured that He will.
        - (1) The Lord hasn’t sent us on a fool’s errand.
        - (2) He hasn’t sent us out to leave us on our own – to accomplish nothing.
        - (3) He sent us to proclaim His truth to others,
        - (4) To gather His sheep.
        - (5) He will do through us exactly what He wants,
        - (6) So you can know that none of your efforts will be wasted.

B. Preview.

1. Now Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
  - a. And as the Christ, He had to lay down His life – He had to sacrifice Himself so that you – and all who trust in Him – would live.
    - (i) The Scripture said that He must suffer many things.
    - (ii) He had to be rejected by the leaders of His people Israel – the elders, chief priests, scribes.
    - (iii) He had to be put to death.
    - (iv) But three days later, He would rise again.
    - (v) He told them in no uncertain terms,
    - (vi) As plainly as He could.
  - b. But this isn't what Peter wanted to hear.
    - (i) He took Him aside and began to rebuke Him: “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Matt. 16:22).
    - (ii) Jesus turned, saw the disciples, and for their sakes, as well as Peter's, He rebuked Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's” (Mark 8:33).
    - (iii) Why did Jesus say this?
      - (a) Was it because Satan had possessed Peter?
        - (1) No, Peter was a believer.
        - (2) The Lord would never have allowed it.
      - (b) Was it because Satan influenced Peter to say this?
        - (1) That's certainly possible.
        - (2) He constantly works against God's kingdom.
        - (3) You must always be on your guard against him.
      - (c) But there is another, perhaps more obvious reason Jesus said this: because Peter was acting like Satan.
        - (1) Satan wanted things his own way – which is why he rebelled against God in the first place.
        - (2) That's exactly what Peter was doing.
          - (A) Perhaps he did this out of love, not wanting to see Jesus killed.
          - (B) Perhaps it was because he thought Jesus was going to take command of Israel and lead her to victory against the Romans.
          - (C) But for whatever reason, Peter wanted this, not the Lord.
          - (D) He wasn't setting his mind on God's interests – as Jesus always did – but on man's.
  2. Isn't this the most difficult problem we face today as believers?
    - a. That we're more concerned about what we want than what the Lord wants.
    - b. Why was the Lord able to accomplish so much through such believers as John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, George Whitefield, and William Carey?
      - (i) Was it just because God called them to this work? Does He ever call those to the same work that don't accomplish as much?

- (ii) Was it just that they had greater gifts? Again, does He ever give gifts only to have them wasted in some way?
  - (iii) These things had something to do with it; but there was another reason – one that had to do with their hearts, with the choices they made:
    - (a) They chose not to hold onto the world or the things of this world.
    - (b) They chose not even to hold onto their own lives.
    - (c) But they set their hearts on what the Lord wanted.
- c. For those of us struggling in this area this morning – which includes all of us to one degree or another – Jesus’ rebuke to Peter is also meant for us.
- (i) He was speaking to His disciples –
    - (a) But Mark tells us He was also addressing the crowd –
    - (b) This applies to everyone who would follow Him from that day forward (v. 34):
    - (c) You must set your heart on the Lord’s interests, not yours.
  - (ii) Jesus says this because He loves you and wants what is best for you.
    - (a) But this doesn’t make it any less serious.
    - (b) You need to let go of this world,
      - (i) Even your own life,
      - (ii) And follow Jesus without reservation,
      - (iii) If you are to see heaven.
- d. Let’s consider two things:
- (i) If you want to save your life – if you want to live your life the way you want to live it, rather than the way the Lord calls you to live it – you will lose it (v. 35).
  - (ii) But if you lay down your life – if you deny yourself and follow Jesus – you will gain it (vv. 34-35).

## II. Sermon.

A. First, Jesus says if you want to save your life, you will lose it (v. 35).

1. By saving your life, Jesus has in mind here,
  - a. Holding it back from Him.
  - b. Using your life for what you want to do – seeking your own glory in this life –
  - c. Rather than what He wants you to do.
  - d. He means not dying to yourself,
  - e. Not picking up your cross,
  - f. And not following Him.
2. If you pursue what you want in this world,
  - a. Then you will lose your life.
  - b. You will lose out on eternal life.
    - (i) You will not inherit eternal life, but eternal death,
    - (ii) Because you would not submit to Him,

- (iii) And give your life to Him.
- (iv) This is the evidence that you're not really converted.

B. But, on the other hand, if you lay down your life, you will gain it (vv. 34-35).

1. By laying down your life, He means,
  - a. Completely surrendering yourself to Him,
  - b. To love, honor and serve Him,
  - c. With your whole heart and mind,
  - d. With all your strength,
  - e. Throughout your whole life.
  
2. If you pursue His glory in this world,
  - a. Then you will gain your life:
  - b. He will give you eternal life.
  - c. It's not something you will earn,
  - d. But something you will show you have.
  
3. Now understand what Jesus doesn't mean by this.
  - a. He doesn't mean that you shouldn't pursue an education,
    - (i) That you shouldn't get a job,
    - (ii) And try to do your very best in the field you've chosen.
  
  - b. He means that you must choose a profession,
    - (i) That is lawful – that isn't sinful; that is something He commands,
    - (ii) That is helpful to your neighbor – and mankind in general,
    - (iii) And then do your very best to honor Him in it,
    - (iv) As well as seek to bring the Gospel to those you work with and serve,
    - (v) And to draw all the attention to Him for your accomplishments,
    - (vi) Rather than to yourself.
  
  - c. If you do this –
    - (i) If you give your life to Him,
    - (ii) If you submit to His will,
    - (iii) If you live for Him, rather than for yourself –
    - (iv) You will show yourself to be a true believer,
    - (v) And you will inherit heaven.
  
4. Jesus adds a couple of reasons why you should do this for further motivation.
  - a. What if you did go the way of the world?
    - (i) What if you were very successful,
    - (ii) What if you did what so many have wanted to do – gained the whole world?
    - (iii) What would you really have gained?
      - (a) Everything that you achieve,
      - (b) That you worked your whole life to get –
      - (c) All the riches, all the fame, all the fortune –

- (d) Everything will be lost one day.
- (e) These things are only for this life, not for the life to come.
- (f) You can't take them with you.
- (g) In the end you will lose everything.
- (h) And so you've gained nothing.

(iv) But what else will you lose in the process?

- (a) Your immortal soul.
- (b) To gain the world, you have to give this up.
- (c) You not only lose the world, you forfeit your soul as well.
- (d) How much is your soul worth?
  - (1) What's it worth to you?
  - (2) It's not a part of you that you can do without.
    - (A) Something you wouldn't notice if it was gone.
    - (B) It's you – it's your personality, the part of you that thinks, that feels, that makes decisions.
  - (3) You don't actually lose it – it's you that becomes lost:
    - (A) Lost forever in hell.
    - (B) You lose your body as well – soul here probable refers to both.
    - (C) Is the world worth that much to you?

(e) Jonathan Edwards once wrote, "The damned would be ready to give the world if they could to have the number of their sins to have been one less."

- (1) In this world, they gladly give their souls to gain as much of the world as they can.
- (2) But in the torment of that world to come, they would gladly give the whole world just to reduce the punishment of their sentence by one sin.
- (3) Is the world really worth the loss of your soul?

b. Jesus says if you are ashamed of Him,

- (i) If you prefer the world over Him,
- (ii) If you lack the courage to stand up for Him in the face of this world,
- (iii) Then He will also be ashamed of you –
- (iv) He will not stand up for you –
- (v) On the Day He comes in His glory to judge all men (v. 38).
- (vi) If you choose the world over Him,
  - (a) You will lose your soul.
  - (b) Jesus will disown you on that day.

c. Every day you're faced with a choice between the world and Jesus: Which do you choose?

- (i) No Christian is perfect.

- (a) If you're a believer here this morning, you know that you fail every day.
- (b) But you also know that you repent every day.
- (c) You can't choose the world over Jesus –
  - (1) The Lord won't let you,
  - (2) You love Him too much.
  - (3) Does this describe you?
  
- (ii) Or do you choose the world over Christ?
  - (a) If you continue to do this and don't repent,
  - (b) The Lord will disown you when you need Him the most.
  - (c) You will lose your soul.
  
- (iii) Consider what the world will cost you, and choose life instead.
  - (a) Give Him your life.
  - (b) Choose to serve Him.
  - (c) Trust in Jesus, and turn from your sins.
  - (d) Then He will own you as His on that day,
  - (e) And will openly receive you, and give you honor.
  - (f) May the Lord grant each of us the grace to make the right choice.

Amen.

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