

LUKE 18:31-34 8-31-14

DULL DISCIPLES, AMAZING JESUS

(Luke 8) We look this fine morning at an account from the gospel of Luke, which is recorded as well in Matthew and Mark. Like the gospels, like the Bible, like history, like our lives. It is all about Jesus. He is the Source, the Center and the Goal. Luke 18:31-34 *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again." 34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.* Over and over throughout his book and in many ways Luke, the Jesus-lover who wrote this account, is demanding that we come face to face with the question, "Who is this Jesus?" (R) Luke wants you to ask that question with all seriousness and his record of the life and words of Jesus is meant to provide you with answers. Today we are going to get a glimpse of our Savior in all of His meekness and majesty but before we look at the amazing Jesus we need to first consider His dull disciples. They had a problem. It is a problem we humans often have. I read this week about three old men in a nursing home who were taking a memory test. The doc asked the first, *What is three times three?* The old gent said, *274.* Hmm. The doc asked the second man, *What is 3 x3?* The second man said, *Tuesday.* Hmm. The doc asked the third old fella, *What is 3x3?* The third man said, "9." *Great,* said the doc, *how did you come up with that?* He says, *Easy, I subtracted 274 from Tuesday.* There are some misunderstandings that we can understand or appreciate but there are others that leave us befuddled. Why can't so and so understand what I am saying? Why is my child so slow to catch on to certain concepts? Well, this is one of those cases that might leave us so puzzled. How in the world could the disciples, who were normal, intelligent men fail so completely to understand what Jesus told them in our passage? To us it seems thoroughly straightforward. Jesus tells them, "OK boys, we are going to Jerusalem. I will be handed over to Gentiles. I will be mocked, mistreated, spat upon, scourged and killed. On the third day I will rise again." Miraculous to be sure, but they had seen that from Jesus. Otherwise, what could be more plain and simple? 34a *But the disciples understood none of these things.* And let me make it even more puzzling for you. They had more reason to know these things than we find in our text. The disciples, in spite of all this were surprised by the crucifixion of Jesus and even

more surprised by the resurrection. And they had no excuse. Jesus indicates in our passage that whatever was going to take place in Jerusalem was going to be a fulfillment of prophecy. So, to begin with, these Jewish men should have known their Old Testament well enough to expect that the Messiah would have to undergo a rejection, a betrayal, a crucifixion and then an exaltation to glory, but like so many of their contemporaries they had missed that in their Old Testament studies. Now, if you are like me, you probably find that excusable. After all the Old Testament is a big book, but but but. When their Master sits them down and tells them in plain English or Aramaic what is about to occur it seems incredible that they should not understand. What makes it worse is that we have every indication that Jesus told them this, not once, but many times. Matthew 16:21 puts it this way, **21** *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.* "Began to show" indicates that this was something Jesus repeatedly tells them. In the gospel of Luke we have more than one record of Jesus saying these things. Luke 9:**43-44a** *while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears. You would think that would get their attention. 44-45 Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."* 45 *But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.* Jesus taught about His death in various ways as He spoke of giving His life as a ransom. He spoke about his resurrection as well. You will remember in John chapter two how He said that if you destroy this temple that He would raise it up in three days. Remember what He said about the sign of Jonah. Like Jonah came out of the whale's belly so He would come out of the belly of the earth. So open had Jesus been about His intention of rising from the dead that even His enemies were aware of His claims. In Matthew 27, after the death of Jesus, we read of how the chief priests and scribes went to Pilate and said, **63-64** *Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.'* 64 *Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."* Somehow the enemies of Jesus remembered the claims of Jesus but His friends forgot. His friends never even understood! This is weird isn't it? Let's see if we can figure out why they did not understand.

Our text says 34 *But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.* The only hint in that verse as to why this was is contained in the middle clause which says that these things were hidden from them. In Luke 9 it said they were concealed from the disciples. Who or what was concealing it? There are a couple of possible answers to that question. The first answer is that the prejudice of the disciples hid it from them. You know how that works don't you? There is a tendency among us to see the things we want to see and hear the things we want to hear and block out everything else. It is the phenomena I have discovered in children which I call selective deafness. It is that ability that kids are born with which prohibits them from hearing a plainly stated directive like "pick up your toys" or "do your homework" while at the same time allowing them to hear the slightest whisper favorable to their desires. It doesn't matter if you are on different sides of the house, if you just whisper the word "cookie" your children come running. But you can look 'em straight in the face and say, "get your clothes on" and they won't be able to hear. It's amazing. It's selective deafness and we all suffer from it to some degree. That is why we talk about people, usually other people, having "blind spots." These are things we can't see because we are blinded by a certain bias or interest that distorts our reasoning. Well, the disciples had a deaf spot which was there due to the prejudice and the faulty ideas they had about what the Messiah and the kingdom of God would be like. They grew up being taught and so did thoroughly expect that the Messiah would move triumphantly into Jerusalem on a shining white horse to take over the city and cast off the oppression of Rome. They had no room in their theology for a suffering Messiah. The bit about Jesus being scourged and killed just would not compute because they were not programmed to receive that kind of information. The word about the resurrection should not have been a problem to them but they so stumbled over the other stuff they never even got to the resurrection comment. Besides you had to die for that to happen and such a defeat was considered impossible. They misunderstood that Jesus was to lay down His life. They failed to see that His kingdom was not to be of this world. In Mark's gospel, you may recall, right after Jesus said these things James and John sent their momma to Jesus asking if they could be his vice-rulers in his kingdom. They showed they had not learned the lesson. They couldn't even hear the word about suffering because they were only tuned in to power and glory. Possibly, indeed it is likely that the disciples were deafened by their own prejudice.

The other explanation as to who or what concealed these things from the disciples is that God did it --that God intentionally confused them. That sounds to us as a strange suggestion. Does God really do that kind of thing? I mean, I thought God was into revealing things about Jesus not concealing them? Well, as we read the Scriptures we learn of several occasions wherein God carries on this ministry of concealment. He does it as a form of judgment but also for other reasons. What reason might God have here to darken the minds of the disciples? I can think of a couple of things. First of all, if the disciples had understood what Jesus was saying they would very likely have hindered Him from going to Jerusalem. In Matthew 16, right after Jesus had told His disciples that He was going to die, Peter said, "God forbid it Lord, this shall never happen to you." He was ready to stop Jesus from walking into trouble in Jerusalem. You could just imagine Peter leading an intervention to prevent Jesus from the danger of the cross. Secondly, if the disciples had understood the words of Jesus they might not have followed Him into Jerusalem. They did not have the courage of their Master. You will recall that, once the hard times hit, the disciples scattered, Peter denied knowing Jesus, and I would bet you that if they really thought all this was going to happen they would have never entered Jerusalem with Jesus. So, the Lord saw fit to hide it from them for a time, for a while. Don't forget that God did not keep these truths hidden from the disciples. They came to understand them after the fact in greater brilliance than any of us know them. One thing you might wonder is why Jesus bothered to tell the disciples if He knew they would not be able to hear it. I think He wanted His men to experience the "Oh yea" syndrome, which they did over and over again. The "oh yea" syndrome was common for these men as they saw over and again the words of Jesus coming true before their eyes and, as they saw it, they remembered what Jesus had said. Luke 24 gives us the resurrection story of how the women went to the tomb and found the body of Jesus missing **4-8** *While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; 5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."* 8 *And they remembered His words.* What did they say to each other? "oh yeah, Jesus did say something about that didn't he?" The gospel of John is just full of these "oh yea" experiences. One of them is in John 2 where Jesus, standing at the Jerusalem temple says **2:19-22** *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* 20 *The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build*

this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. This was according to the Lord's plan for His men. In John 16:4 after telling His disciples that they would be persecuted, yet another comment they could not receive, Jesus said John 16:**4ab**. *these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them.* And although the Lord hid certain things for a while He would soon reveal them by His Spirit. And when He did the disciples would say, "Oh yea" and they would trust in the word of Jesus like never before.

Well, that is enough time given to the disciples let's look now at what our text tells us about Christ. It gives us again a snapshot of our amazing Lord. It shows us first of all His amazing knowledge. After talking to His disciples about the rewards of their sacrifices for the kingdom Jesus turns our attention to His own upcoming sacrifice which makes any of ours look rather piddly. It is a valuable exercise, I think, to focus not on my own noble sacrifices which often leads to self-pity but on the sacrifice of Jesus which leads to humility and peace and motivation. But what I would have you notice now is the incredibly detailed understanding and knowledge Jesus had of what awaited Him in Jerusalem. He said it will all happen like the prophets said. 32-33 *For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.*" He doesn't leave much up in the air does He? He knew about every element of His sufferings. "Delivered up to the Gentiles" - this means that the Jews who hated him would turn him over to Roman authorities who alone had the power to put Him to death. In Acts 2 Peter said this to the Jews **23** *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. You killed him Peter said "thru the godless Gentiles."* They gave him over to Rome and begged for His death. Jesus said He would be mocked, spat upon and scourged. He said that this fulfilled the prophecies and indeed it does. Isaiah in chapter 53 of his book spoke of the Messiah and said **3-5** *He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.* As Isaiah said it would be, so Jesus said it would

be and so it was. Mark 14 tells us that after Jesus was arrested, while before the high priest, they accused Him of blasphemy. The high priest spoke to Jesus and said **64-65** *You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?*” *And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. 65 Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.* Some time later, we read this in 15:**15-20** *Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified. 16 The soldiers took Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the whole Roman cohort. 17 They dressed Him up in purple, and after twisting a crown of thorns, they put it on Him; 18 and they began to acclaim Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 19 They kept beating His head with a reed, and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing before Him. 20 After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.* It was all according to the word of Jesus. None of this came as a surprise to our Lord. Indeed, if you can bear to hear this, He planned it all. Jesus was not a tragic victim, He was the Victor who take an unusual course to His goal. The fact that Jesus told His disciples exactly how it would be well in advance shows you not just that Jesus was a good prognosticator but that He is sovereign and it reinforces the truth of John 10:18 where Jesus said of His life **18** *No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.* Jesus knew it all because He planned it all.

Then too, consider with me what this passage reveals about the amazing love of Jesus. Jesus knew what awaited Him in Jerusalem. He knew the agony that would be His and yet what did He do? He went. Often you hear statements like this, "If I had known how rotten my boss was I would have never taken this job." Or, "if I had known marriage would be like this I would never have gone for it." I remember a friend of mine in seminary who had open heart surgery saying that if she had known how painful it was going to be she would not have done it. And what touches me is the fact that Jesus knew. Jesus knew intensely what the pain would be like. His knowledge was so precise and His imagination so strong that He could feel the nails and the whip and the spittle running down his face. And yet He went to Jerusalem! From Luke chapter 9 on Jesus was heading to Jerusalem to be rejected and to die. And He knew it! But His love for lost rebel sinners like you and me kept Him from changing course! That is amazing love! At every step along the way Jesus could have abandoned the plan but He so loved us that he laid down His life. So what do you think

Christian? Does Jesus really love you? Folks, if this isn't love I don't know what is. And think about what this means for us. Think about how much your Lord loves you! And what that means for your life now. Romans 8:32 *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?* If Jesus is willing to do this for us what is He going to withhold? No good thing. Our God has given us His Son what else is left? With Him, says Paul, He freely gives us all things.

So, Jesus has amazing knowledge, amazing love, and one other thing. He has amazing power. I mean, if you can confidently predict your own resurrection and name the day, you have to have some clout. You gotta have some connections higher up ya know? To pull this kind of thing off takes power! And Jesus had it. To you Christians I ask, if Jesus could promise His own resurrection and do it what promise has He made to you that is too difficult for him? And you here who are not devoted to Jesus yet, if Jesus could predict His own resurrection and actually pull it off, as history records,. how do you justify not following Him? How do you explain this? This is an awfully brash claim Jesus makes isn't it? You ready for football season to start? It's about time for the action to begin because up till now there has just been talk. In pro sports you get a lot of talk. A lot of brash, bold prognostications. I remember back in 1969 when Joe Namath made the incredible claim that his upstart New York Jets would beat the mighty Baltimore Colts in the third Super Bowl. People then thought that was absurd. They were appalled at his brashness. How do you think it would have sounded if Namath had predicted that his team would score 40 points in the last minute to win the game? That would have been regarded not as brash but as insane. Was the claim of Jesus any less outlandish? Much more so wasn't it? I mean it would be one thing if He had just predicted His death. That would not have been remarkable except that no one predicts their own defeat. When was the last time you heard a politician say he thought he was going to lose? Nobody predicts their defeat. We often predict victory - but over death? I mean the 69 Colts were tough but death is virtually undefeated over thousands of years. But Jesus predicts victory and names the day. I don't know about you but if I am going to pull off a resurrection hoax I am not going to name the day and I am not going to let my enemies in on it. Jesus did both, but that was okay because Jesus had the power of the Almighty on His side. And He defeated the Romans and the Jews and death itself and to the amazement of his dull disciples He came out of the grave as the conquering Lord of life.

Explain that for me will you? Explain for me the prophecies fulfilled by the birth, life, and death of Jesus. Explain how hundreds of years before He came it was foretold that the Messiah would be

born of a virgin in Bethlehem, that He would be betrayed by a friend for silver, that He would ride into Jerusalem on a colt, be killed and that He would not remain in the grave. Paul was able to write in I Corinthians 15:3-4 *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* Josh McDowell says there are three reasons why you should believe in Jesus. The first is the fulfilled prophecy in His life. The second is the resurrection. Explain to me the empty tomb, explain how the church could preach a risen Christ and mean it. We know He is Lord because He said so and we know He is right because He rose from the dead. Listen, if Jesus can make such an outlandish claim as this, that He would rise again, and if He can name the day and actually do it then you can put all the philosophy books back on the shelf. You can tell your gurus not to call on me. If Jesus can do this then He has won my allegiance. He has proven that He can be trusted. What sayeth thou about this Jesus? The gospel witness is that Jesus is risen from the dead. So, trust Him. His word is true and His power amazing.

I said a moment ago that Josh McDowell teaches that there are three reasons why you should believe in Jesus. Fulfilled prophecy, the resurrection and #3 is the changed lives of believers. Let me tell ya. The disciples one day came to understand thru experience what Jesus was telling them here and when they did they became new men and women. They were changed. In fact, the world was changed. I know that what Jesus said is true, in part, because I too have met the Risen Jesus. And He has changed me. So, Mr or Miss Skeptic, here is our witness. We believe that Jesus Christ really is Lord of all. We believe He really did die as he said, and we know that He is alive. What are you gonna do with someone who makes a claim like this, that He will rise again, and does it? You think about that one. Think about it long and hard. And when you are ready we will gladly welcome you into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and the family of God.