

Title: ISSUES IN DISCIPLESHIP, MARK 8:27-38
(Chatham, NJ; 9/16/12, AM) [Pc – Comparisons]

Theme: Jesus reveals the essence of discipleship, and the epistles help us see how the principle of dying for Christ is applied to real-life issues.

Purpose: To compare matters dealing with competition, money, and success with what Jesus says about discipleship and reveal how they are transformed by it but not necessarily thrown out.

Introduction:

1. When Peter expresses Jesus' true identity as the Messiah (29), he reveals at that time the nature of discipleship.
2. It is directly related to the cross, and disciples are called upon to die in order to live.
3. In the letters dying becomes the metaphor for ceasing from sin, turning one's life around, and living according to God's ways.
4. It is life-transforming.
5. We aren't called upon to run off to a mountaintop and give up everything, but we are called to transform everything we are and have in order to bring them in line with the will of God.
6. What appears restrictive is actually empowering; discipleship unleashes us from the self-centered desires and channels those desires toward God.
7. We'll look at three things today: competition, money, and fame.
8. We look at them in the context of discipleship as defined in Mark 8:35. (explain)

I. Competition

A. To compete or not?

1. What might hockey look like in heaven?
2. Does discipleship remove all manner of competition?
3. Paul uses a sports analogy to describe the competition of winning the prize of eternal life, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
4. The root meaning of Satan in Hebrew is "adversary," thus competition seems inherent at least in some way.
5. Denying ourselves doesn't take away competition; it directs it differently.

B. In the Epistles

1. Paul seems to appeal to it in Romans 12:10 – "Outdo one another in showing honor."
2. Phil. 2:3 – consider others as more important (there is at least an implied comparison here)
3. I realize that we could turn this into a competition over who is the most humble, which entirely defeats the whole purpose.
4. Yet Paul uses this to spur the Corinthians to get their benevolent work going again in 2 Cor. 8:1-8; he uses another church's work to motivate them.
5. Discipleship channels what could be evil impulses toward God and his will, and thus the command to die to self but live for Christ.

II. Money/Greed

A. Love of money, 1 Timothy 6:10

1. Col. 3:5 calls covetousness idolatry; the word means a desire for more.
2. Can be translated as greed, but it is too easy in today's climate to associate this sin with the rich
3. Economist Milton Friedman was asked how he could support free market capitalism considering all the greed involved in big business; his answer: tell me how to get the greed out of government.

4. Government never cuts spending; they cut the rate of increase in spending.
5. But covetousness is not limited to them; blue collar covetousness is still idolatry.
6. One of the causes of covetousness is jealousy.
7. The rich today are the people we love to demonize.
8. How does discipleship affect the impulse of covetousness?

B. Command those who are rich, 1 Timothy 6:17-19

1. All of you are beneficiaries of free market economics (IRAs, bank accounts, etc).
2. If the rich institutions do well, so will you.
3. Notice what Paul says to the rich in these verses; he never tells them to sell everything and give to the poor: use it for good, be generous, don't put your trust in your wealth.
4. Use your wealth on behalf of Christ; this is discipleship.
5. Should we discourage those who have the talent for making money from making it? Should we take it from them?
6. NOTE: Chick-fil-A donated 1 million dollars to a church in Atlanta recently: a member had been VP of public relations but died suddenly; originally \$250,000 was quadrupled.
7. A charitable arm of the company that does this all the time.
8. They have replaced greed with gratitude and their operating motivation; discipleship produces this; free market allows it to take place.
9. Capitalism is not a system of greed but a system that unleashes human potential.

III. Fame/Success

A. Proliferation of shows that offer fame.

1. Appeals to dreams of being famous drive people to get on the show.
2. The number of shows leads me to believe that there are way too many people who have placed fame as the zenith of all that is good and right.
3. Discipleship would suggest that appeals to self are evil.
4. Furthermore, do I really want all that attention? Do I want my privacy invaded to that degree? Do I want cameras following my every move?

B. Is success therefore an evil to be avoided?

1. Should we punish success by taking what they earn?
2. Is success a measure of faithfulness? How do we measure it?
3. Let's look at this from the beginning of the process, rather than the end.
4. Does the Parable of the Talents demand our best efforts (Mt. 25:14-30)?
5. Does each person get the same amount?
6. Does the master expect each servant to put forth his best effort?
7. Would the one-talent servant have been condemned had he at least put the money where it could gain something?
8. Why was he called wicked, slothful, and worthless?
9. Discipleship demands that our talents, time, and resources should be used on behalf of the Kingdom.
10. This is what dieing to self means.

Conclusions:

1. Discipleship demands that we become different in our approach to all these things.
2. We are transformed by the Gospel; we die to old ways and live for Christ.
3. What we've been given by God—talents, money, resources—are meant to be now geared toward their usefulness in promoting the Kingdom of God.
4. God owns all; we are merely stewards of his gifts; this is discipleship.
5. Practice it every day.