

First Serve

Studies in the Gospel of Mark

Text

Mark 9:30-32

Topic

His disciples are afraid to ask Jesus how the Son of Man can suffer and be killed

Title

"No Questions Asked"

Introduction

Carl Sagan once said, "There are naive questions, tedious questions, [and] ill-phrased questions. But... **There is no such thing as a dumb question.**"

He must not have seen the most recent list of the *Thirty Dumbest Questions Ever Asked Online*, as reported by yahoo.com.

Here is a sampling of five:

1. "Should I tell my parents I'm adopted?"
2. "How big is the specific ocean?"
3. "If the NFL is only for the United States, how does New England have a team?"
4. "Are chickens considered animals or birds?"
5. "Does it take 18 months for twins to be born?"

Lawyers have been known to ask dumb questions of witnesses. Here are three of them from actual court transcripts:

1. "How far apart were the vehicles at the time of the collision?"
2. "Now, doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, in most cases he just passes quietly away and doesn't know anything about it until the next morning?"
3. Then there is this one: An accused man, acting as his own lawyer, asked, "Did you get a good look at my face when I took your purse?"

One way to not ask dumb questions is to not ask questions at all. It's a strategy we see in our text.

The twelve disciples of Jesus Christ were walking with Him on the outskirts of Galilee. He said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant about His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. Instead of asking Him to clarify, they are described in our text as being "afraid to ask" Jesus any questions.

What might they have asked? Two things come to mind:

1. "Jesus, why do You have to die?"
2. And, "Jesus, when You're gone, how are we supposed to live?"

Those are great questions to ask and to have answered on Easter 2016. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Don't Be Afraid To Ask Jesus Why He Died For You, and #2 Don't Be Afraid To Ask Jesus How To Live For Him.

#1 Don't Be Afraid To Ask Jesus Why He Died For You

(v30-31)

See if you can recognize the book or film being described in these one-sentence summaries:

- A boy wizard begins training and must battle for his life with the Dark Lord who murdered his parents (*Harry Potter & the Sorcerer's Stone*).
- A young English woman from a peculiar family is pursued by an arrogant and wealthy young nobleman (*Pride & Prejudice*).
- A Russian sub captain leads the Soviet navy on a merry chase while he tries to hand over the latest Soviet submarine to the Americans (*The Hunt for Red October*).

Jesus' comment to His disciples is a one-sentence summary of the Gospel:

- He spoke of His death.
- His burial is alluded to in that He would be in the tomb three days.
- Then He would rise from the dead.

Death... Burial... Resurrection. The apostle Paul makes certain that we know that this trio of truths is the Gospel in his letter to the church at Corinth:

1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the **Gospel** which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

1Co 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures,
1Co 15:4 and that He was **buried**, and that He **rose** again the third day according to the Scriptures,

You can say more - a lot more - but you can't say anything less, or leave part of it out, and call it the Gospel.

Let's see *when* and *why* Jesus gave His guys the Gospel.

Mar 9:30 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it.

Mar 9:31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

Jesus wanted to keep a low-profile in order to spend quality time with His disciples.

Do we still use the expression, "Blow your mind?" Does it blow your mind that Jesus Christ, Who the Bible says is the Creator of all things, and God in human flesh, wants to spend quality time with His disciples? *It should.*

Class was in session as they walked, and Jesus had a very concise lesson. But before we get to His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, however, we can't overlook this title, "the Son of Man."

It's a very interesting title, chosen by Jesus very carefully. When we see what it means, we will have a much greater understanding of the mindset, and the subsequent confusion, of the disciples.

It might help to recall that the Jewish Scriptures - what we routinely call the Old Testament - were not divided-up into chapters and verses. That came much later in history.

Jews recognized sections of Scripture by key words and phrases. A teacher, like Jesus, would start with a word or a phrase, alerting the students (in this case the twelve) where He was referring them to in Scripture.

- If I got up and said, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," you'd recognize that as the very first verse of the Bible.
- If I said, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?", you'd probably recognize that as the opening words of Psalm Twenty-two.

"The Son of Man" doesn't have quite the effect on us as it did the Jews in the first century. You might not know where it's from.

When the twelve heard the phrase, "the Son of Man," they would have thought of what we call Daniel 7:13-14.

Dan 7:13 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the **Son of Man**, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

Dan 7:14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

"The Son of Man" was a name for the coming Messiah Who would reign as the King over the Kingdom of God on the earth. It would have captivated and excited the disciples to hear Jesus use the title of Himself.

In fact, they would have heard little else.

If you are a parent or grandparent, and especially if you have boys, you've seen the Pixar movie, *Cars*, over 100 times.

By the way - If you don't cry *every time* at the end when Lightning McQueen is pushing the King over the finish line, there's something wrong with you.

There's a scene at the beginning when the King is trying to give Lightning some sage advice. As soon as the King mentions the word Dynaco, Lightning checks-out mentally, and can think of nothing besides being the next Dynaco spokes car.

That's similar to what happened with the disciples. Once they heard "the Son of Man," they checked-out mentally. Their thoughts were all about the Kingdom. **It must be about to begin.**

It is accurate to speak of the spiritual kingdom, in which God overrules history by His divine providence. But there is also the promise of a real, brick-and-mortar Kingdom of God on the earth.

- It will be ruled by a king who will be seated on David's throne in Jerusalem, Israel.
- The current earth will be restored, so that streams break out in the desert.
- Weapons of war will be turned into farming implements.
- Lions and lambs will frolic together.
- Righteousness will be the rule of the entire world.

This coming kingdom was so ingrained in their national psyche that the Jews ignored other, more difficult, portions of their Scriptures - like the ones that spoke of their Messiah as a Suffering Servant.

Cut these guys some slack. The idea that their Messiah would suffer and die was completely new to them.

- Regarding Jesus' comments on betrayal, the disciples would have wondered, "Who on earth could betray the Son of Man - and why would he?"
- Regarding Jesus' comments on being killed, the disciples would have wondered, "Who could kill someone Who was so glorious, and Whose dominion and kingdom are everlasting?"

They asked no questions. Let me suggest the first question they ought to have asked: "Jesus, why must You die?"

How many answers do you think there are to that question? It might surprise you, but one contemporary theologian has identified **at least 50 reasons Jesus must die.**

(It would be more accurate to say that Jesus' death on the Cross accomplished at least fifty things according to the Bible).

C.S. Lewis narrows the main reasons in this quote:

We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed. Any theories we build up as to how Christ's death did all this are, in my view, quite secondary: [they are] mere plans or diagrams to be left alone if they do not help us, and, even if they do help us, not to be confused with the thing itself.

In other words, Jesus had to die because that's the way God's universe is structured, and works itself out, to the glory of God, and to the redeeming of creation.

The physical universe has certain laws that govern it - like gravity. We could say that there are also laws that govern the spiritual universe. A few of those laws are, "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and, "without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]" (Hebrews 9:22).

Man is a sinner. The punishment for sin is death, followed by eternal conscious torment in Hell.

God's solution for sin and death - and the only possible solution to remit sin - is for God Himself to become a man in order to take our sins upon Himself, and to take our place in death. Because He was both God and man, His death could do both the things C.S. Lewis said - "wash out our sins" and "disable death itself."

I want to talk, for a moment, to anyone here who is not a believer in Jesus Christ.

(If you are a believer, don't check out; **pray**).

We've said that Jesus' words are the Gospel. In another place in the Bible, we read that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). One of the things that means is that when you are told about the death, burial, and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ, **God empowers it to reveal to you that you are a sinner in need of salvation.**

When the Gospel is presented, something spiritual occurs; something supernatural. Your blind eyes are opened, and your bound will is freed in order that you might respond to the grace of God in offering you the forgiveness of your sins, and eternal life.

That's why you are prompted, even commanded, to obey the Gospel. It is a genuine offer, for you to receive, or to reject.

For me, it happened in early 1979 as I was watching a Christian film. God used it to penetrate my heart, and to reveal to me that He was real, and alive, and involved in human history.

A day or so later, I experienced a terrifying moment in which I knew, for the first time, that I was indeed a sinner by nature, to my very core; and that nothing I could ever do would be sufficient to cover or overcome my sins. I knew that if I were to die in that state, not only was Hell my final destination, but that I deserved Hell.

I knew I was a sinner in need of salvation, and when I was told that Jesus died for me, I readily accepted His offer to save me.

Don't be afraid to ask Jesus why He died for you. He died to save you from sin and death, and give you eternal life.

What must you do to receive the Lord? Repent of your sin; believe in Him as your Savior. He is drawing you, by grace; you can respond in faith.

#2 Don't Be Afraid To Ask Jesus How To Live For Him

(v32)

Did the Son of Man establish the Kingdom of God on earth in His first coming? He did not. Something happened to delay it.

In the first eight chapters of Mark, Jesus had been going about preaching repentance, saying that the Kingdom of God was at hand. He had been performing miracles that were consistent with His claims to be the promised Messiah of the Jews. He had been routinely defeating the devil, casting out demons - sometimes thousands at a time.

Unfortunately, the rulers of Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah. They sought ways to discredit Him in the eyes of the people, and, ultimately, they sought a way to kill Him.

Their response meant a change in plans. The Lord would die; He'd rise from the dead after three days. Then, after forty days, He'd ascend into Heaven, to await a Second Coming to the earth.

The Kingdom of God on earth that was promised to the nation of Israel would be postponed until Jesus' Second Coming.

In the time between His two comings, Jesus would commission His followers to "go into the whole world, making disciples of all men."

They would do it, and we do it still, by preaching the simple Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection from the dead of Jesus.

We're getting ahead of ourselves; or, rather, we're getting ahead of the twelve disciples. Their grasp of these things was still some days in the future. For now, they were confused, and troubled.

Mar 9:32 But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

This episode is found in both Matthew and Luke. Luke is especially insightful. He writes,

Luk 9:45 But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

"It was hidden from them," *but not by God*. That makes no sense. Why say "they *did not* understand" if, in fact, they *could not* understand?

"It was hidden from them" on account of their own expectations and preconceptions. Remember what we said about their understanding of "the Son of Man," and the Kingdom of God. They expected the Son of Man to do what they read in Daniel 7:13-14.

There was no room in their expectations for the Man of Sorrows that Isaiah described:

Isa 53:3. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Isa 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

Isa 53:5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

Isa 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

Isaiah and Daniel were describing the same Person. The Son of Man was the Man of Sorrows.

It was not in the thinking of the twelve - or any of the Jews - to see their Messiah as "the Son of Man of Sorrows."

After Jesus rose from the dead, and especially after He ascended into Heaven, the disciples would "get it." The Kingdom of God is postponed while the Gospel goes out to the whole earth.

I addressed nonbelievers a moment ago; now it's time to talk to believers.

Is the Gospel for us? To put it another way, Is the Gospel merely the message we preach to see folks converted, or is it also a message in our daily lives?

I'll let the Bible answer that question. The apostle Paul addressed believers and told us how the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus impacts our daily lives.

Rom 6:4 Therefore we were **buried** with Him through baptism into **death**, that just as Christ was **raised** from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

The death, burial, and resurrection from the dead of Jesus doesn't just convert sinners. It empowers and enables saints. We can, right now, "walk in newness of life."

"Newness of life" - What does it mean? It means this. When we are born again, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive a life which we never before possessed. We begin to feel, to think, and to act as we never did before.

We are born-again - born spiritually. God the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us. We are given a new nature.

Our old, sin nature, is not eradicated; it lingers on in what we call "the flesh." But we find within us the power to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, and alive to God, and to therefore say "No" to sin and disobedience.

Charles Spurgeon has a powerful sermon on "newness of life." In it he describes our newness of life by cataloging our new hopes, our new motives, and our new possessions.

We have new hopes. We wait for the glorious appearing of our Lord. We look for new heavens and a new earth. We have a hope which defies death.

What difference does that make? Well, if we are serious about our hope of the Lord's imminent return, it affects every thought, and every decision, every day.

We have new motives. You live now to please God. Once you lived for what you could get for yourself; you lived for the passing pleasures of a fleeting life; but now you have launched upon eternal pursuits. Eternity holds your treasures; eternity excites your efforts; eternity elevates your desires.

We have new possessions. All spiritual blessings are ours in abundance, so much so that if all our material possessions were to fail us, we nevertheless praise Him. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, so much so that we can endure with joy and victory even the greatest suffering. We can draw from abundant grace, rich mercy, and peace that passes all human understanding.

Christian, are you daily hearing the Gospel? You are if you are walking in newness of life, rather than settling for the things of this world.

DirecTV launched a series of hilarious commercials in which a family of frontier settlers is living in a contemporary neighborhood but in a rustic one-room cabin without any modern conveniences. The father is refusing to switch from cable tv.

The father says, "Now mother, we are settlers. The boy has his stick and hoop, the girl has her faceless doll, you have your cabbages, and I have my foot stomping."

Christians can be settlers. The very fact there are, in the Bible, exhortations to not forsake our gathering together, and to not leave our first love, and to walk soberly, show that we can settle for a life in this world that is less spiritual than the one Jesus has mapped out for us.

I think especially in our great nation, with its opportunity for wealth and our precious, blood-bought freedoms, we can end up living our lives almost as we would have lived them without Jesus, other than acknowledging that He has saved us, and occasionally attending church.

We can become convinced that the phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is a verse from the Sermon on the Mount, and settle into the American dream.

I'm not criticizing; I'm making a comparison.

Do you remember those pizza commercials that asked, "What do you want on your Tombstone?" It was funny because we routinely put summaries of our loved ones lives on their tombstone, or headstone. They're called epitaphs. You can usually choose from a list of the more common sayings, like "loving husband and father."

Which of the following two sayings would you rather be your epitaph:

1. "He dedicated himself to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,"
2. or, "He desired to come after Jesus by denying himself, and taking up his cross, and following the Lord" (Mark 8:34).

Maybe you are exactly where God wants you to be. Maybe your plans for your life are in absolute harmony with His plans for your life.

Even so, you certainly need to make minor course corrections from time to time. Take this opportunity to adjust your course.

For some of you... Maybe just one of you... Today is the day you realize you've left God out of your plans.

How open are you, really, to Jesus giving you new direction?

Don't be afraid to ask Jesus how to live for Him. Instead, remember this: "But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM" (First Corinthians 2:9).