



This week at Magdalen Road Church we finished off our series in the first half of Marks Gospel (we'll come back to it in September). In one sense this is the hinge of the gospel as Jesus's identity becomes clear to the disciples - the focus changes from 'who is Jesus?' To 'what's he come to do, and how do we follow him?'

### 1. How to see (v22-30)

This is a section of acted parables and so these verses are held together by the idea of sight. As Jesus partially heals, and then fully heals the blind man so we see something of what is happening with Peter later in the passage as he confesses Jesus's identity. <sup>[OBJ]</sup> it's not that Jesus gets the miracle wrong, and has to give it a second go, but rather that it's an illustration of what is about to happen with Peter as he partially identifies Jesus.

This is the climax of this section of the gospel as the truth we learnt in 1v1 is now evident for all.

Being clear on the identity of Jesus <sup>[OBJ]</sup> is one of the most important questions we have. If he is who he says he is then we need to have given this our attention.

### 2. How to follow (v31-38)

This next section <sup>[OBJ]</sup> ought to come with a health warning because they are remarkably challenging words. They are challenging at the best of times but perhaps especially difficult as we live in a culture where 'denying yourself' is often seen as something wrong or dangerous <sup>[OBJ]</sup>. We are told that we should do our own thing, be who we are and ignore the negative voices - and so v34 to v36 are hard verses to accept.

This call for us to follow him though, is rooted in his own example. Which is why Peter ends up being rebuked. As soon as Peter has confessed Jesus's identity as the Messiah - God's king - so Jesus redefines what kind of king he is going to be (and so implicitly what

kind of enemies he's coming to deal with. Rather than dealing with the Romans he's come to sort out sin, suffering and Satan).

But Peter cannot see that. He is at the stage of being able to see walking trees rather than clearly seeing Jesus's kingship. Notice that just as at the baptism in chapter 1 after Jesus's sonship was revealed and Satan tempted him, So here as Jesus' kingship is revealed against Satan seeks to thwart.

The challenge for us though is that to follow Jesus we have to follow Jesus to the cross. He says it three times But each time emphasizing that we are to die to self and find life in him it's a very stark decision.

### We finished on the three points of application

#### 1. Let's be a church that gets Jesus right.

It seems obvious to say it but there is a real danger that we can get Jesus wrong like Peter did. Sometimes people say "to me Jesus is more like this" (often he is essentially created in our image), but Peter felt the brunt end of getting Jesus wrong. Let's pray that we might be a humble church that is willing to believe Jesus to be who he says he is, rather than preconceived expectations or the kind of King we would want him to be. <sup>[OBJ]</sup> Getting Jesus wrong matters.

#### 2. Let's be a church willing to follow Jesus

Being willing to follow him and to deny ourselves is not just an optional thing or something for leaders or the super-keen, but rather for normal Christians. The daily death to self works its way out in the little things of life, the daily decisions interactions and choices.

#### 3. Let's be a church that knows it's worth it

Our question ought to be "but is he worth it" and yet one of the things that is so beautiful about Jesus is that he knows us far better than we do and he is more committed to our joy and our life than we are, he has much more wisdom than we do so as he calls us to follow him we can trust him because he is totally committed to our good. It is worth it. Indeed he is so committed to our joy and our life and our good that he is willing to lay down his own life for us.

### Here are a few questions to start of your group

- Summarise this passage in one sentence.
- Why do you think Mark puts the healing of the blind man just before Peter's confession?
- <sup>[OBJ]</sup> What does this show us about our need for him to open arise? How ought this affect our prayers? Our evangelism? <sup>[OBJ]</sup>
- What does it mean to follow Jesus? Why is it so stark? How does that daily following of Jesus work out in the little things of your life? Be specific...
- Why is it worth it?