**The Gospel of Mark: A Disciple’s Mirror**

***Reflections on Following Jesus:*** From A Handbook on Cross-Bearing

**Mark 8:31–9:29**

***The Bridge from Cross to Crown--*** How do we overcome our fear of suffering to follow Jesus?

**What’s (happening in) the story?** Jesus defines discipleship.

The disciples confess Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah. But what does this mean? What KIND of Messiah is He? In a word, He is the kind who humbles Himself to lay down His life for others, and then asks His disciples to do the same. But. . . but. . . but. . . what about the Kingdom, and all of the prophecies of glory? And what about John? And how do we deal with this suffering and even the demonic evil of the world? Much is at stake in the answers.

**What’s the challenge in the story?** How do I embrace suffering?

To a culture dedicated to comfort and to avoiding pain at all costs, Jesus’ call to cross-bearing will sound both alien and traumatic. And rightly so. If Jesus is Messiah–and He is–the Cross is a game changer, for it is the one way God satisfies His justice, shows grace to sinners, and conforms those same sinners to Jesus’ image. The cross is the cure for our rebellious “self.” John 12:25, 26; 15:20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:16, 17; 1 Thessa-lonians 3:2-4; 2 Timothy 3:10-13; Hebrews 2:10; Revelation 1:9

**What are the key elements in the story?** As disciples. . .

Jesus calls us into His suffering, which means allowing suffering and reproach to correct, discipline, and purify our lives. 8:31–9:1

Following Jesus means taking up our cross because of His, realizing that we thus exchange “what we can not keep for what we can not lose.”

Jesus calls us to share in His glory, which is not inconsistent with His suffering, as confirmed in and by the prophets. 9:2-13

Following Jesus means anticipating an eternal reward for all sacrifices made, in keeping with God’s plan to glorify Himself and His grace.

Jesus calls us to walk by faith, by which we draw upon His supreme authority and infinite power to overcome sin and evil. 9:14-29

Following Jesus means believing that He is both willing and able to help us, and provide all that we need in the moment.

**What’s the big idea (main point) of the story?**

Full dependence upon Jesus’ authority and power enables us to live beyond the temporary losses of discipleship and for His eternal glory.

***So let’s take a look at ourselves in Mark’s mirror. . .***

* Denying self is not suicide, but the joyful discovery of true life. It means leaving behind selfishness for true

 self-interest. God’s glory and our joy need not be at cross purposes. Phil 2:1-13; Rom. 8:18; Gal. 2:20

* Trusting Jesus is not folly, but the ultimate wisdom. All that we now see, one day will be gone, and then what is now unseen will appear, for-ever present. Are you ready? 2 Corinthians 4:7-11, 16-18