



2018 LENTEN STUDIES  
AND CONNECT GROUPS  
LAUNCH  
4PM AND 7.30PM  
WED 14TH FEB

# CROWN and CROSS

TALK 1 at our  
TEWANTIN SITE

TALKS 2-6 in  
CONNECT GROUPS

Connect  
Groups

## Lenten studies 2018 - Mark: Crown and Cross

### Study 3 - Cost of the Cross - Mark 6:7-30

Read Mark 6:7-30, then watch Pete's talk: <https://youtu.be/Y86eOA57Mwg>

*If there are people who couldn't make it last week, would leaders please just take a moment to introduce everyone?*

1. Had you heard the story of Ridley and Latimer? Anyone seen the memorial in Oxford? What impact did their story have on you?
2. Have you ever felt 'under the pump' for trusting in Jesus? Has trusting Jesus impacted your reputation, your career, your family relationships or some other significant aspect of your life?
3. How do you think you'd respond if it came to a life and death situation as a follower of Jesus? Pete asked us to consider whether our love for Jesus would override our love for life? Thoughts?

#### The calling to ministry

4. Look again at v8. Why did Jesus ask them to take nothing for their journey?
5. If living for Jesus becomes something merely drive by habit, or giftedness or personality, Pete warned us to *watch out*. What are the dangers of trying to live for Jesus, *without* Jesus - ie - entirely in our own strength and with our own resources? How can we guard against such emptiness?

#### The content of ministry

6. Pete suggested that the Gospel is about so much more than individual forgiveness and access to heaven. Rather, Mark's Gospel teaches that it's about God's Kingdom breaking into this world - it's an announcement of freedom and wholeness and restoration! Did you understand this?
7. Jesus saves us *from* something and *for* something: to quote Pete - *where you learn to serve differently, to work differently, to be married differently, to parent differently, to think differently, to be entertained differently, to spend money differently, to view possessions differently, to view retirement differently, all for the glory of God*. Share with the group what you find most challenging about the all-encompassing nature of the Gospel. How has the Gospel changed *you* over time?

#### The cost of ministry

8. v30 is the other part of the "Markan sandwich" here. The bit in the middle, is the sorry story of John's beheading. What's the point being made by putting John's beheading here, interrupting as it does, the account of the apostles' mission?  
(\* Note, you could lift vv14-29 right out and the text would still make sense!)
9. Read Mark 8:34-35. What do these verses mean? Save our life and we'll lose it? Lose our life for Jesus and we'll save it? See if as a group you can work out an explanation which your non-Christian neighbour or work colleague may be able to understand!

*Share if there's anything in particular which struck you from this talk/study. Pray that having been challenged to lay down our life entirely in the service of Jesus, we will continue to wrestle with all the implications of what that means.*

# Mark: Crown and Cross

## Talk 3 - Cost of the Cross - Mark 6:7-30

### Introduction

I wonder how many of you have heard the story of Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer? The year was 1553, and Queen Mary had ascended to the throne of England. She became known as 'Bloody Mary', for she had that many people put to death for their religious convictions.

Her father - King Henry the 8<sup>th</sup>, had separated the church in England from the Catholic Church. Henry then died, and his son Edward became King. And Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were two godly, Christ-serving men, who advised Edward as to how to reform the church, so to make it a more bible-based, and more Christ honouring. Ridley became the Bishop of London, and Latimer became the Bishop of Worcester. History tells us that Latimer's sermons - and I quote 'emphasized that men should serve the Lord with a true heart and inward affection, not just with outward show.' Sounds familiar doesn't it? We are Latimer's and Ridley's spiritual descendants.

King Edward became gravely ill, and his half-sister Mary became Queen. And Mary made it her mission to return the church of England back to its Roman and Catholic roots. Bishop Ridley, Bishop Latimer and Archbishop Cranmer - the author of the prayer book we still use today - were all arrested and sent to Oxford where they were examined by the Lord's Commissioner at Oxford's Divinity School.

They were asked a whole range of theological questions - but one key area centred around the authority of the pope. When Ridley was asked if he believed the pope was heir to the authority of Peter as the foundation of the Church, he replied that the church was not built on any man but on the truth Peter confessed - that Christ was the Son of God. Ridley said he could not honour the pope in Rome since the papacy was seeking its own glory, not the glory of God. These opinions were deeply offensive to the Roman Catholic theologians.

And so, on the morning of October 16, 1555, both Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were tied to stakes, had firewood placed around their feet, and were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ. As the flames rose, Latimer shouted out to Ridley and encouraged him. He said these famous words "Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out."

Queen Mary died 3 years later, and her re-establishment of Roman Catholicism was then reversed.

Now that story sounds so distant - doesn't it? And distant in a few ways. It happened over 500 years ago. We didn't know anyone back then. It was another time. It sounds distant in terms of geography - it happened a long way from here. 24 hours by plane today; and close to 12 months away by sea, back then. And distant in terms of likelihood. I mean - that is a pretty moving story - but it belongs more to the history books, than it does to our experience, right?

This famous story of our spiritual descendants raises two questions for me, and for all of us, I hope. Question 1 - I wonder how many of us have actually *really* been under the pump for trusting in Jesus? How many of us have really felt the insult, the sting, the pain and the cost of thinking, standing and saying - Jesus comes first, and you will not move me. Jesus comes first, and I will wear the cost? How many of us have really felt the flames? Perhaps not on our legs, but on our hearts, our reputations, our careers, our decisions we make for our families because of Jesus?

The second question is related. It is the question of how would you respond if that happened? How would I respond? If indeed it came to a life and death call – am I a true follower of Jesus? Which way would I go? Does my love for Jesus over-ride my love of life? Does yours?

Well – that is exactly what today’s passage is all about. Now if you’re thinking to yourself – really? I just heard that read, and that is not what came to mind as to what this passage is all about – that’s OK! Because this is another Markan Sandwich. Remember those things that sound like I have made them up but I haven’t?

This is what we saw last week – ‘sandwiches’ - are this technique Mark uses where he starts to tell a story, which is then interrupted by a seemingly unrelated story; and then after that we get back to the original story. And you’ll remember that the meat interprets the bread. The middle story is the key to understanding the outer story. Well, today we stumble upon another one. And again – it informs the way we are meant to read this section.

Here is what we’re going to look at today – three things. We’re going to look at the calling to ministry, the content of ministry, and the cost of ministry. OK? The calling, the content and the cost.

### **The calling to ministry**

Let’s start with the calling. In verse 7, we see that Jesus gathers the 12 disciples to himself, gives them instructions and then sends them out. Now the 12 disciples were appointed by Jesus back in chapter 3. And since then, they have walked and witnessed and watched Jesus over a period of time. But their cadetship, their MTS is over – and now they are sent out to replicate the ministry of Jesus.

Now something we need to be clear about here – is that these instructions Jesus gives to his 12 disciples - Jesus gives to his 12 disciples. What he says here is not explicitly for us. Jesus is speaking to 12 men who walked, witnessed and watched him – in a way we don’t. And they are now sent out to replicate exactly what Jesus did, in a way we don’t. But that is not to say that this passage doesn’t apply to us. It does.

Can you have a look at verse 8? ‘[Jesus] charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff - no bread, no bag, no money in their belts - but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics’.

Whilst for any normal person this sound like gross negligence before going on a trip – don’t pack anything, don’t think about food, and don’t take jumper – for the disciples it is all about faith. About trust and dependence upon the one who will guide their mission.

When I head to Africa to teach theology, I pray about that – I pray that God will lead me to the people who I can share the Gospel with, to have the biggest impact. Flights, shots, accommodation – I’ve got those. What I have noticed I do, is that I bring before God the spiritual dimensions of the trip. But the physical? I’ve got it! The 12 disciples are being taught here – spiritual/physical - Jesus has it all. Don’t assume that there are certain parts of life that are for me, and other parts are for you – I will lead you, guide you, and hold you. Not a part of you – but all of you. Don’t do anything in your own strength.

You know, it is remarkably possible to do ministry in your own strength. To write sermons, to share the Gospel, to even lead your family. And when we do it, instead of depending upon God, we depend upon either habit, or natural giftedness or personality or something.

And here is the thing – very often people won’t notice. I can stand up and exhort you all to love your wives winsomely and powerfully, and yet have spent the week ignoring Bree and being unkind to her. I can do that. And you wouldn’t know.

You can pray with your children before they go to bed at night, and you can talk to them about how Jesus would have them live, whilst spending your day prioritising promotion over godliness, or being discontent rather than joyful, essentially relegating your saviour to a Sunday morning, and your kid's bedtime. And they won't know.

But here is the thing – it will kill you. It will kill you. If your 'Christianity' becomes something that is driven by habit, or giftedness or personality - and if that becomes by and large the way you live, *watch out*. For you are creating for yourself a shell of a Christian. All exterior and cavernous within. Which is bankrupt, and hypocritical. Or – as Jesus himself so evocatively put it when describing other people who do this – a white washed tomb – beautifully presented on the outside, but on the inside full of dead men's bones. And we can all do it.

And the answer for the disciples and for us – for anyone who follows Jesus - is dependence upon Jesus. Total, unequivocal, universal dependence. Not merely for the spiritual. But learning to see God's good and kind hand in every morsel we eat, every hour we work, every dollar we have and every jumper we wear. And when we live and serve and minister out of that complete dependence upon God himself – we minister the Gospel truly.

So, the disciples are called to a dependant ministry. But then we learn about the content of their ministry.

### **The content of ministry**

I want you to imagine for a moment that you live next door to someone who is not a Christian. Or you have a parent or a sibling or a child who is not a Christian – not hard to imagine, is it? And I was to ask you – what do you long for most for that person. And my guess is – those of you who love the Lord Jesus would say – that they would turn to Jesus. By which you mean, that they would seek his forgiveness, and find eternal life. Right?

A great answer – but a completely inadequate answer for Mark. Confused? Stay with me. For a whole range of reasons, we have reduced the Gospel to a personal spiritual transaction between an individual and God. We so personalise the gospel, that in our thinking we reduce it to the forgiveness of sins and to access to heaven. And - to be clear – it is not less than that! But it is so much more. And Mark does not make this mistake that we often do; nor the Apostle Paul for that matter. And nor should we.

What we see in this passage, and what Jesus tells his 12 disciples to do – as he himself did – is found in verses 7 and then 12 and 13. So in verse 7 we read – 'And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits'. And then in 12 and 13 "So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them."

Did you see it there? Jesus doesn't just send them out to 'preach the Gospel'. No – they are to go out, and proclaim that people should repent, and they also cast out demons, and anoint the sick - who are healed! What is going on? What we are seeing here, is the disciples do what Jesus has been doing. Which is breaking in the Kingdom of God. Which is ushering in a new state of affairs. Which is bringing to the world a new day and a new way.

You see demons are beings that can bind and destroy and imprison someone – the Gospel breaks people free. Sickness is here 'the shadow and effect of death' if you like, and the Gospel frees people from death and its ability to destroy life. What we are seeing is that Jesus and the disciples are bringing a wholeness to people. Freedom from sin, liberation from enslavement, pulling people out from under the shadow of death. Whole people are being saved, restored, freed and having life brought back to them. And that is what it is to live in the Kingdom of God.

Here is what we see. Jesus and the disciples are not focussed upon people being forgiven and getting to heaven. No – they are focused on the breaking in of the Kingdom of God. Now – you might be thinking – what’s the difference? The difference is huge.

Often the way we think about it – is that the ‘preaching the Gospel’ is about getting people over the line. Trust in Jesus, turn from your sin – and find him. Great! Now you’re a Christian! It is so inadequate. Jesus did not come to get people over a line. Jesus came to break in his Kingdom. Jesus came to restore the way that His people were to know God, and then live for him in this world of His. The Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ is much more about the restoration of a people than the salvation of an individual.

Now please don’t get me wrong. Please do not hear me saying that people repenting of sin and turning to Jesus in faith is not important. I’m actually saying it is hugely important in fact. I would say that it is of first importance! We see that in Mark’s Gospel, and we see that in the baptism of John the Baptist when we read that he came ‘to bring a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins’.

Repentance is the first thing. It’s just not the only thing. It is the door way; if you like. But doors lead somewhere? And repentance is like the doorway into a house, into a Kingdom. A Kingdom that needs to be lived in, and explored and spoken of.

Perhaps a better way to put it is like this. Jesus saves you from something. He does. He saves you, us - from sin and death and from the isolation and despair and judgement that that brings. Brilliant. But – he saves you *for* something too. He saves you from something – but he saves you for something as well. He saves you for the Kingdom of God. A new life, under a new king, with a new spirit in your heart. Where everything all of a sudden, everything looks different. Where you learn - by the mercy and grace of God - to serve differently, to work differently, to be married differently, to parent differently, to think differently, to be entertained differently, to spend money differently, to view possessions differently, to view retirement differently, all for the glory of God, all for the praise of Jesus. That’s what the repentance does. That is what the Gospel does, that is what entering the Kingdom does.

And the disciples are to learn it, teach it and live it. And so are we.

### **The Cost of Ministry**

And so now we turn to the third thing we see here – the cost of ministry. And here we get to our sandwich. Story 1 – Jesus sends out his disciples. Story 2 – this strange story that looks back on the death of John the Baptist. We know from chapter 1:14 that John the Baptist was put in prison – but we never found out what happened to him. Well, here we find out. Mark retells a story of what happened to John. And it is awful. A weak leader makes a rash promise. And a scornful woman calls for the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

Story 3 is one sentence. And remember, if this is a sandwich, story 3 needs to tie in with story 1 – about the 12 disciples being sent out, and sure enough we find it in one verse – verse 30 – ‘The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught’. And the NIV have put it under the heading ‘Jesus feeds the five thousand’, though it would have been better to place it at the end of verse 29.

What is going on? What is Mark trying to show us through this sandwich? Here is what we have. In story 1, we have a story about what it means to be a disciple. In story 2, we then have a story about the murder of a disciple. Which then in story 3, jumps back to the theme of what it means to be a disciple. And the middle story interprets the outer. Do you see what Mark is saying? Being a disciple of Jesus, is all about death.

One scholar has put it like this 'the rather awkward appending of the return of the twelve (in only one verse!) must mean that Mark saw a relationship between missionaries and martyrdom, between discipleship and death'.

What Mark is saying is this - if you want to follow Jesus - you have to die. Now, hang on. Some of you will be thinking - yes - but we already know that not everything in this section is specifically for us - he is speaking to the 12 disciples after all. So that death stuff may well be only for the 12 disciples. And after all - we know that they almost all died for Jesus in any case, right?

You got me. Good point. You might be right. That may well be a specific insight for the 12 disciples. But what do you say to Jesus when in Mark 8 he says this "Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Everyone knew that the cross was an instrument of death. Jesus is saying to the crowd and his disciples and to you. If you want to follow me - you have to die.

Just after Jesus tells the crowd and the disciples to take up their cross, he says this 'whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.'

So here is what I think Mark is saying, and here is what Jesus is saying. And it is all to do with death. If you live for yourself - you are going to die. Finally, ultimately and eternally you will die, and find yourself separated from the person, the love and the goodness of God forever.

But Jesus also says if you want to live - you have to die. See? It's all to do with death. If you want to live you have to die - you have to die to self, to ambition, to pride, to the flesh, to insecurity, to gratification. You have to die to all those things - and if you do, you will live. You will find life. Not only here and not only now. But here, but now and for ever.

Following Jesus is all about death. Have you really considered that? now some of you will say - no, that's not right - following Jesus is all about life! I agree! Following Jesus is all about life - but to enter that life you have to die. Ironic, isn't it - because that is exactly what Jesus had to do. For Jesus to take up life in its fullness, he had to die, so he would live at the right hand of his Father. And so do you.

And so the question for us all is two fold. Have you died, and do you continue to die? Have you died to that desire to save your life, to live for yourself; to make a mark? Have you died to that? Have you died to Jesus?

And do you continue to die? Do you - daily - repent and turn back to Jesus, give yourself over, seek his forgiveness, lay your life before, humble yourself before the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you take off the crown that seems to find its way back onto your heads after every night's sleep; and do you lay that crown at the foot of the cross each new morning - and say - I am not the king - but you, Jesus - are? Do you do that? Disciples do. Those who are called to follow Jesus, do.

## **Conclusion**

This is Martyrs Memorial, which stands in Oxford today to commemorate the faith and courage of Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer, and Thomas Cranmer. You will almost certainly never be asked to publically denounce your Christian faith upon fear of death. You will almost certainly never need to stand up for Jesus like these men. But would you? More than that - have you, and do you? Have you died to self? And do you die to self? For those who call on the name of the Lord to be saved - it is the only way.