

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon title: Dull Disciples, Mark 9:30-32

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SCRIPTURE: Mark 9:30-32 ³⁰ *They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.*

INTRODUCTION: Major Ian Thomas, the founder of Torchbearers who wrote many of the classics of the Christian faith, *The Saving Life of Christ, If I Perish, I Perish*, and *The Mystery of Godliness*, often made this statement: “Nobody ever had a duller Bible class than Jesus.” In a strange way, that might encourage some of us who teach the scripture and some of you who have taught faithfully for years, and still wonder if our students have “gotten it.” We spend time studying, praying, and preparing—trying to think of clever illustrations and applications—then the class dismisses and the students go on their way, seemingly unchanged and unmoved. That’s the kind of Bible class Jesus had.

In this passage, we see the Master Teacher, Jesus, pulling his disciples away from the crowds for a concentrated time alone for teaching. Can you imagine that—a retreat with Jesus as the keynote speaker?

ILLUSTRATION: As most of you know, I spent several summers working at a summer camp in East Texas, and there was always a sense of excitement when our favorite speaker was preaching for the week. We hung on every word. The Spirit moved. Lives were changed. But, sometimes we didn’t understand a concept the speaker was trying to get across, either because we were young and immature or because we were exhausted. Camp life is tough. Sometimes we were a dull Bible class even though we were listening to some of the best speakers in the country.

There are three things Jesus wanted his disciples to know:

1. I am being betrayed.
2. I will be killed.
3. After three days, I will rise again.

First, I AM BEING BETRAYED,

The NIV version I read sounds like the future tense in verse 31: “*The Son of Man is going to be delivered ...*” However, the Greek word used here, *paradidotai*, indicates present tense. The Amplified version probably translates it better: “... is being delivered ...” It was already happening, and Jesus wanted his disciples to be aware and forewarned as to what they would be facing. I wonder what Judas thought when Jesus made this statement. Surely he was already plotting the despicable deed of betraying the Messiah. He probably thought, “Does he know? Why is he warning us if he doesn’t know?” Can’t you just picture him looking from beneath furrowed brows at the other disciples to see if they had a clue? He did not have to worry. They didn’t have a clue.

Judas, with his sneaky conniving ways, had every opportunity to repent. But, as you know, he did not.

Second, I WILL BE KILLED.

EXPLANATION: The disciples’ heads were probably reeling by now. Have you ever received news so shocking that at first you couldn’t even process it? You couldn’t wrap your brain around it. It didn’t make any sense. Like a tragic accident or a death, this was the reaction of the disciples. However, they shouldn’t have been so shocked, for this is the second time Jesus had told them he was going to be killed.

A few weeks ago in our study of Mark, Jesus had told them he must die, and then Peter took him aside and rebuked him. In retaliation, Jesus told Peter basically that he was thinking naturally, not supernaturally.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:23 *Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men”.*

I would imagine Jesus' words tumbled Peter down a few rungs of the ladder. But, the disciples still didn't get it.

EXPLANATION: Their concept of the Messiah was a conquering king. They still thought Jesus was going to lead a coup to overthrow the Roman government. We hear about coups from time to time. In fact, there was a recent attempt to overthrow the government in Turkey. And, really, we need to give the disciples some grace here. That's what they'd been taught all their lives—when the Messiah comes, he will restore the kingdom. The disciples had declared they believed him to be the Messiah, but they simply did not have a clear picture of the suffering Messiah prophesied in Isaiah but instead remembered the passages that foretold of the conquering Messiah (Daniel 7:13-14, Ezekiel 37:24, and many others). Jesus wanted his disciples to understand he is going to be killed. He wanted them to prepare themselves for it, but they still were not getting it.

The reality was: in the day Jesus came, many were disappointed with him. Many had a false image of him. Today many have false images of Jesus, too.

ILLUSTRATION: I knew a man who basically just quit his whole Christian journey because he said he'd been faithful to the Lord for many years and the Lord had not blessed him. You see, he had an image of Jesus that was false.

We know Jesus will return again, and I'll talk about that in my next point. But, I am afraid those who think they have Jesus completely figured out may very well be disappointed when he returns. They may even know the Book of Revelation by complete memory, just like the Pharisees knew the Old Testament by memory. Oh yes, I believe when Jesus returns, there will be modern day Pharisees who won't believe it's him. The main problem with the Pharisees, at least as I see it, is they thought they had it all figured out, and when Jesus came, he interrupted their way of thinking and teaching and living. To the Pharisees, Jesus brought a train wreck into the middle of their tightly spun theology.

Third, AFTER THREE DAYS, I WILL RISE AGAIN.

That Dallas Holm song is running through my brain—an oldie, but a goodie—*Rise Again*:

Go ahead, drive the nails in my hand, Laugh at me, where you stand. Go ahead, say it isn't me; the day will come when you will see, Cause I'll rise again, Ain't no power on earth can tie me down. Yes, I'll rise again; Death can't keep me in the ground.

Go ahead, mock my name, My love for you is still the same. Go ahead, bury me. But very soon, I will be free. Cause I'll rise again, Ain't no power on earth can tie me down, Yes, I'll rise again, Death can't keep me in the ground.

Go ahead, say I'm dead and gone. But you will see that you were wrong Go ahead, try to hide the Son, But all will see that I was the One. Cause I'll come again, Ain't no power on earth can keep me back Come to take my people back.

Jesus even tells them, “*After three days, I will rise.*” Honestly, I can empathize with the disciples. This was pretty mind boggling, but Jesus wanted them to know this. He wanted them to remember this **as he was being killed ... that he would be back.**

ILLUSTRATION: When my kids were little and we left them with a babysitter or grandparents, we always told them we were coming back to get them. “We’re leaving now, but we will come back for you. We will always come back for you.” They were too immature to understand. They simply had to trust us. If the kids were with us and we had to stop at the grocery, many times Susan would get out of the car at the store entrance, and I would drive around the parking lot. I used to joke, “Let’s leave her,” and the kids chanted, “Leave her, leave her!” Then when we saw her leave the store, I’d toot the horn, and she’d walk in our direction. One time, one of my sons decided he didn’t like the game anymore, and he said, “No, Dad, don’t leave mom!” He knew I’d never do such a thing, but he just didn’t like the idea of it. And, that was the last time we played that game. I always wanted to reassure my kids.

EXPLANATION: Jesus wanted to reassure his disciples...he would be back. They might not understand, and they might be fearful, but he wanted them to trust him that he would be back.

They had questions, but they were afraid to ask them. There has been much speculation as to why they were afraid to verbalize their questions. I think it's pretty understandable. They were a little embarrassed to admit in front of their peers they weren't getting it. Haven't you been in a class or a discussion when you really wanted to clarify a point, but you were hesitant to do so because you didn't want to admit you didn't understand what the teacher was talking about?

ILLUSTRATION: Years ago, there was a popular Gospel tract called "The Four Spiritual Laws." Once during a Bible study, a speaker referenced it. Afterwards, a couple said, "You mentioned the Four Spiritual Laws, and we don't know what you were talking about." The leader just assumed everybody knew. This couple was afraid they had missed out on some spiritual truths they needed to know, so they asked. But, they were embarrassed to ask in front of the group.

EXPLANATION: On this side of the cross, we may be much like the disciples. But, Jesus still wants us to know these things—that he died and rose again, and there is no need to be fearful. We don't understand everything about the Second Coming, or the Rapture, or the Tribulation, and it may tend to instill fear in us, but Jesus made us a promise that he's coming back for us. We simply need to trust him and not be embarrassed about asking questions. Let's not be a dull Bible class. Let's sharpen each other in our study of the Word. Let's claim the Scripture, "*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7). Our job is to trust what he has told us and to remain vigilant until he comes.

CALL TO ACTION: The altar is always open—open for those of you who sense the tugging of the Spirit of God on your heart to follow Jesus, commit your life to him if you've never done so, or to join our fellowship here at Tusculum Hills. We welcome you if you have asked Jesus to forgive you of your sin and you've made him Lord and Savior of your life. But, if you've not done this, today is the day for you to be saved. Don't put it off any longer. It's been many years since I was saved, but I still remember the altar call and the tugging of the Lord, knowing he was calling me.

Don't be like the dull disciples. Jesus wants you to know that he died, he rose again, and he's coming back for us!

PRAYER: Lord, people need to respond to the message today. We ask for your movement among us. We ask that you touch someone's life today.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA