

Plain Talk Forsaken
Mark 8:31; Mark 9:30-37; Mark 10:32-45
Bruce Stallings

This is a little bit of a unique service that we've put together for tonight to try to focus our attention and to engage all of us in somewhat of a personal Holy Week journey so that we can go through and embrace and soak up all that the Lord would have to deliver to us through Holy Week. I will confess I love Holy Week. I absolutely get excited about looking forward to plan my year almost around Holy Week. I just love the study of Holy Week. And there's a couple of things the Lord's done in my life to make me love Holy Week. I think that's his idea, not mine, but to make me love the idea of Holy Week.

One's pretty predictable and does not surprise me at all. Probably shouldn't surprise you. The other one is somewhat unique. The predictable one -- going to Israel with Harry Reeder. Going to Israel with Harry changed Holy week for me forever. One, it just gave context to be able to actually see and understand and put myself in that place. Go to Israel! I wish everyone of you could have gone to Israel with Harry but he's with Jesus now so I don't know who the person is to go with, but go to Israel. Okay? Because one of the things it does is it helps you to allow the setting to materialize so that you actually see and know, and you better understand. And if I would say this, if you've never been to Israel, whatever you're thinking, it's 1/10 the size of what you're thinking. So when it refers to something, it's right there. So, you know, you don't have to walk and walk and walk and walk and walk and walk to get there. You can point to it. It's right there. So that significantly impacted just my personal study of Holy Week.

But the other event was somewhat unpredicted. Years ago, I'm going to guess 25 years ago, maybe longer, I can't remember. But years ago I had the opportunity to play golf with a group of men -- it was a PGA Chaplain senior tour kind of a deal, and it would take place on Monday after they played the senior PGA Tour here in Birmingham. These different senior PGA Tour guys would play with four other men, guys like myself in an outreach event - it was a part of their chaplaincy program. And so you would get to play with a senior PGA Tour guide and then have a meal together and one of them would share their testimony. The gospel would be shared. It was a wonderful event. And I got to play with a guy. I'd heard his name. I'd followed him just a little bit, just enough to know who he was. His name was Kermit Zali. Now, he played for years and years on the on the PGA Tour. And so we were playing out at Bent Brook and we got to about the third or fourth hole. I was letting the other men brag about how good a golfer they were. Never brag about your golf game to a tour pro, okay? Just don't do it right. So they were asking for hints and tips and everything like that. And so I just kind of let them have their day and I just started into a conversation with Kermit and he asked me what I did and I told him. And so he said, I've got a book for you. And I said, Great. He opened up his golf bag! Now they have enormous golf bags. But he opened up his golf bag and he reached in and he pulled out this

book, The Gospels Interwoven by Kermit Zali. It's a book of the harmony of the Gospels. And so, in other words, (many people have done this) it's not a book like you write a novel or it's not writing his opinion about something. It's simply trying to harmonize the gospels. In other words, from a chronological standpoint, how do you take all the Gospels and force them together and figure out what order all the events took place? It's a harmonization or a, as he puts it, interwoven, working them together.

Now, he didn't independently do all the work. He pulled from, numerous different studies over 400 years where people have done this study. This has been being done since the Bible is written. So people have tried to put the Gospels together to get a chronological understanding, a timeline of the steps of Jesus and what takes place in all of the gospels.

Well, the single most primary benefit that this has had in my life is to be able to look at Holy Week and put together chronologically what actually took place on that Sunday, what took place on that Monday, what was taught on that Tuesday. And when you study some of these things, you look and see that it makes sense now that he said that parable 48 hours before he was crucified. It makes sense of the parable and all of a sudden it gives you an insight to it. As Benny mentioned, we've put this online for your convenience and study. That's just the Holy Week portion of the Gospels interwoven. So if you want to engage personally in Holy Week, I would suggest to you that Holy Week 101-- come to all the services. So, check you are here tonight and you were here this morning so you seem to be doing okay so far. You are well on your way to Holy Week 101.

For Holy Week 201 -- that would be use the devotional guide. Walk your way through each day, use the devotional guide and come to all the services.

Holy Week 301 Now anybody that comes on Sunday night is a candidate for 301 -- Holy week 301 is go through the actual verses. Now you don't have to do every single one of them. I focus on different ones different year but actually pull that off the internet on our website. Walk your way through that and familiarize yourself with that and study that throughout the week and use the devotional guide and come to all the services.

Holy Week 401 Fly to Israel! So 301 is much cheaper. All right. So I would encourage you to to embrace that and to be able to see what the Lord has to teach you from that.

The desire would be to be intentional about Holy week, and this would be different for every single one of us in this room. What is it that the Lord has to say to you this week? We should have a yearning -- we should have a deep desire to hear from the Lord. Certainly, we want to grow in our understanding historically. Absolutely. That would be beneficial. I would absolutely agree with that. But what we really want to do is hear from the Lord -- what is it that the Lord wants to tell us? And it may not be a corporate statement -- that could be individual statements to each and every one of us that he wants to reveal much the way he wanted to reveal himself to the disciples and to be able to for them, to hear him to know and to understand all that he was trying to teach them.

As a matter of fact, tonight, this will be a little bit different format. This is I used to love it when Harry would say on a Sunday night, Now tonight, I'm going to treat this more like a Bible study. I'm going to treat it more like a discipleship group. And we're going to do it a little bit different. I always love that. I felt like he was dumbing it down for me, and then I would go to him and say, now what's below that? Give me that too, You know, let's go eat lunch and I want to get that one too. So tonight, we're going to look at, for the first part of this, what Jesus did from the Gospel of Mark to prepare the disciples for Holy Week. So, if you want to figure out how to prepare yourself for Holy Week, what did Jesus do with the disciples to prepare them for Holy Week? Then we want to provide a time for a season of prayer for you to speak with your Savior and to ask Him to guide and direct you during this time. And then we're going to look at one passage of Scripture from John 11.

If you flip in your Bible and I would encourage you, it may be easier to do it in a physical Bible rather than your electronic Bible, but some of you are really, really blessed electronically. But go to Mark 11. We're not going to read Mark 11 because we're going to use three different passages here. But when you get to mark 11, I just want to note for you that Mark 11 is Palm Sunday.

Okay? So, if you get to Mark 11, you're going to look -- that's the triumphant entry. So that's today -- Palm Sunday. That's what Dr. Dorian preached this morning. So, what did Jesus do prior to that? Well, if you were to back up to Mark 8, 9 and 10 you find three events. These are similar events.

The first one takes place in Caesarea Philippi. The second one takes place in the region of Galilee and the third one takes place on the way to Jerusalem. So, for those of you that can picture a map in your head, do this with me. For those of you who can't hum Jesus loves me to yourself.

😊 Okay. if you can picture a map of Israel in your head over to your right side of the map, all the way up to the top right corner, that would be Caesarea Philippi. You're looking at Israel. Okay. On the left is the Mediterranean Sea. On the right is the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River and the dead Sea and all the land east of the Jordan River.

Okay, so at the top right is Caesarea Phillipi. You come down and you'll eventually get to Galilee. That's the second event you keep coming down towards the Dead Sea, but not quite the Dead Sea. If you were coming down, you'd turn right, you'd go west and you go to Jerusalem, you go up through Bethany, up and over the Mount of Olives and to Jerusalem.

So these three events take place in Caesarea Phillipi, then Galilee, and then on their way to Jerusalem. So, flip over a few pages to Mark 8. We're going to look at starting in verse 31. Okay, this is Jesus talking to the disciples in Caesarea Philippi. Peter has just declared that Jesus is the Christ. You remember that taking place? And then in verse 31, he says:

³¹ And he (Jesus) began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days

rise again. ³² And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

³⁴ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Okay, That's the event that Caesarea Phillipi. Jesus teaches them plainly what is to happen.

You see Peter's response to that and then Jesus's response to Peter. Now flip over maybe a page to mark nine, drop down to verse 30. This takes place in Galilee. So you're coming south and you're heading to Jerusalem. Okay. This is Jesus's last descent from that region, Caesarea Phillipi, through Galilee to Jerusalem, where he will be crucified.

³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, ³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." ³² But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. ³³ And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."

Now drop down to Mark 10. So, we've got Caesarea Phillipi, Galilee and then Mark 10 down to verse 32-45. Now they are literally on the road and they're going up to Jerusalem. So they would have turned west to go up to Jerusalem. It says:

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise." ³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹ And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with

the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ^[d] ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave^[e] of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Okay. Three stories, right? Three different events.

Jesus is preparing the disciples to go into Jerusalem. He knows what's going to happen. And he just told them what was going to happen. Plainly, Mark says it in a very simple and a very plain and a very direct way. What's common in all three of the stories is his prophecy about what's going to take place with him. He was teaching them that the man, the son of man, would suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed in three days, rise again. He said that in Caesarea Philippi. He says the exact same thing in Galilee, in Capernaum, the son of man is going to be delivered in the hands of men. They will kill him. And when he is killed after three days, he will rise. When they get almost on their way to Jerusalem, he says to them one more time, See, we are going up to Jerusalem and the son of man will be delivered over the chief priest and the scribes and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. They will mock him and spit on him and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise. Now, here's my problem. How on earth did they miss that? Ha! How do you? I don't get it. I really don't. I mean, there had to be something. Please tell me Peter at least objected some. Well, we found out that he objected, but they don't digest this. What was going on that kept them from understanding plain talk. Listen, this is not a parable. He didn't say it's like a bird flying through the air who is searching for just the right twig. And you're going, What's the bird? What's the twig? Is there sin? I don't understand what that means. The bird will fly yet again. There was no confusion here.

This was direct and this was plain talk. So how could they not grasped what he said? How could they forget what he said? They missed its meaning completely. They forgot completely what it was that he said. And this is not a minor statement. It's not like this is some secondary or tertiary aspect. This is a pretty significant deal that he is trying to explain to them. What was it that caused them not to hear it?

Well, I'm going to put an asterisk there. I think there's two things that we need to acknowledge there. One, is the sovereignty of God. Secondly, the things of the spirit are spiritually appraised. Always remember that what seem like simple statements, what seem like plain declarative statements that any smart person should be able to conclude, they're only appraised or they're only understood by the Spirit, no matter how simple they are. I have on numerous occasions, one could argue most occasions, shared the gospel with people smarter than me. And I'm just here to tell you the gospel is not a complicated message. I don't understand why they don't

understand it. It just makes all the sense in the world to me. I don't understand why they don't get it, why? Why do they not see and hear the most common thing? It doesn't take brain surgery to figure out the Gospel. And yet it's not intellectually digested. It's spiritually oppressed.

I want to make sure we acknowledge those two things are at work here. But there's something else that's going on here that I think we need to take note of. I think there's a lesson here that we can learn from because there's something else that's common in all three of these different events that that unfold in Caesarea Phillipi.

Peter's response is to rebuke Jesus. That's hard for me. I mean, it's Peter. Okay, so I get it. But still, that's a little strong. Okay. So Jesus says, I'm going to die. They're going to arrest me. They're going to kill me and the third day, I'm going to rise again. He completely misses the rise again part and says, absolutely not.

You see, what Jesus said didn't fit Peter's plan -- Peter had a different idea. Peter had a better way. He thought, no, there's a better way for this to work out. And it's not going to be that you get arrested and that you die and certainly not that you rise from the grave. He had a different agenda and what Jesus said didn't fit his agenda. He was focused on his own agenda in Galilee. When he says to the disciples and communicates to them that same thing, that he's going to die and be arrested, he's going to die and he's going to be rise again. Mark tells us they kept silent because on the way, while they were walking from Caesarea Phillipi out to Galilee on the way, they were actually in another conversation that captured their attention more than Jesus, saying that he was going to be arrested, be killed and rise from the grave.

And that conversation was about which of them was going to be the greatest. You see, they were focused on something other than what Jesus was talking about. And that focus distracted them and kept them from even digesting what Jesus had told them. Mark says they didn't even want to ask questions about what Jesus said because they were embarrassed about the conversation they were actually having along the way. Let me make sure we understand this. Jesus looks at them and says, I'm going to be arrested, I'm going to die, and I'm going to rise again from the grave. They went, okay, who do you think's going to be the greatest? I think it's going to be Peter. No, I think it's going to be John. I think it should be me. I mean, of all the people I've given up the most, it should absolutely be me. That's the debate that they were having among themselves.

And then the third one on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus no more gets it out of his mouth that he's going to die and rise again from the dead and the sons of Zebedee come up and go, Hey, Jesus, do whatever we ask of you. It's almost like they go, yeah, yeah, yeah, but do whatever we ask of you. Allow us to sit one on the right hand and one on the left hand. We find out that in another gospel that their mother was involved. And then it says that the disciples, they don't look at them and go, Hey, guys, y'all quit. Jesus, what did you just say was about to happen when we get to Jerusalem? They don't do that. Instead, they get in an argument with the

disciples again. Now I wonder why they got in an argument with the two disciples that want to sit at the right hand and the left hand. I got an idea. They want to sit at the right hand or the left hand, or they think somebody is about to get something that they don't get. So either way, their attention is focused upon themselves.

Learning lesson. We can get so caught up in being focused on something other than Jesus that we miss the most simple, plain, direct communication that he could give to us. And it's not just that's what happened back then that can be happening to us right now. That can happen to us.

Even this Holy week. We could go through this whole Holy week. Now we can have our devotional guide and we may even want to do the 301 plan. And yet we're so consumed by ourselves – we're so consumed by what Jesus says, setting our mind on the things of man that we missed the plane talk that he has prepared for them.

Jesus response to each of these situations is very telling. He says to Peter, Get behind me, Satan. That's bad okay? So however you interpret that, that's not a good thing. If you respond to Jesus and he says, Get behind me, Satan, He's not complimenting Peter. He's not saying good for your initiative. Literally, what you're saying is the antithesis of what my will is. He says, Get behind me, Satan, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. That's a summary statement right there for all three of these answers. You are not setting your mind on the things of God. You have your mind set on the things of man as a matter of fact. And clearly he then begins to challenge them -- Peter, if you or anyone else wants to come after me, the very first thing you need to do deny yourself and surrender all --deny yourself, and you need to take up your cross and you need to follow me. Not focus on yourself, not always consumed by how does this impact me? The world's not working out the way that I want it to, but be focused upon Christ and putting Christ first.

In the second example in Galilee, he declares to them they need to put others before themselves. So he says to them, He sat down and called the 12. He says if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all. So he doesn't go back and repeat what he said. You didn't hear me? I told you I was going to be arrested, crucified, killed and rise again. He just says there's something in your life that needs to get fixed. You've got your focus on the wrong thing. You've got it on yourself. It should be on Christ first, and it should be on others second.

On the way to Jerusalem the same thing unfolds in His response to the disciples when they were arguing over James and John wanting that favored seat. He says, you know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lorded over them and their great ones exercised authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all, for even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. It's interesting in all of this, his whole point that he's trying to make to them is you can't hear me because you're focused on yourself. You can't hear me because you're focused on the things of man. You're focused on the things of the world. You're not focused on the things of God. Isn't it great that

we don't have that problem? 😊 I do. I get focused on the things of man. I get focused on the things of world. You know, what's amazing to me ... and what's discouraging, I would say, is that they didn't know it, so they didn't realize that they missed anything. They go strolling into Jerusalem just as happy as a lark. They don't understand. They've missed everything that's happening, even to the degree that even when it unfolds, they respond poorly at every turn. And yet Jesus had tried to prepare them. He had told them. He had communicated it plainly, and yet they're not ready. And they threw their arms up and they said, What's happening now? God, why are you doing this? Jesus? Why are you letting this happen? And they didn't understand. Because they didn't remember, because they didn't listen. Because they only focused on themselves. So they weren't listening to what the Savior was saying.

We do not want to find ourselves in that position. So as we enter into Holy Week, let's enter in acknowledging we could walk the very same path that the disciples walked. We could literally be in their footprints. Those are not the footprints we want to be in. We want to be in the footprints of those that are turning their eyes upon Jesus, that are denying themselves, taking up their cross daily and wanting to hear and to understand by the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, wanting to hear and to understand everything that He would have for us.

We don't want to wake up one day after events have unfolded and need to be reminded by the Angels the way they did. The disciples after the resurrection took place and said, Remember what he said to you? That he would rise again from the dead. And then, and only then did they remember or do they remember his words.

So as we prepare to walk through Holy Week, we're going to begin tonight, not with a life application or life take away. We aren't going to take this home and do it. We're going to do it tonight. Okay. So we're going to spend some time here in just a minute in a season of prayer, giving you the opportunity to literally turn your eyes upon Jesus. I love that hymn. I love the words of that hymn --*turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face and the things of Earth grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace*. Remember what Jesus said. You're focused on the things of man, the things of this Earth, not on the things of God and the things of Earth grow strangely dim.

So I'm a very practical person. Here's the measuring stick as to whether my eyes are truly turned toward Jesus. I realize the hymn is not Holy Scripture, but it is just very helpful to me. My eyes are not truly turned toward Jesus until the things of Earth go strangely dim. I'm kidding myself if I think they are. If the things of Earth, if the things of man are not growing strangely dim in my life, in my heart, etc. and we might all be holding on to something different tonight or, by God's grace, you may not be holding on to anything, therefore, pray for others in the room who are, but we might be all be holding on to something different tonight. I want to give you an opportunity just to go before the Lord in a brief corporate season of prayer as this song for us. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to allow us to know if we are fixated on the things of this earth, or does Jesus have our undivided attention? Are we ready to go through

and to hear what he has for us to say? Would we ask him to work in and through our time, in the Scriptures, in our time and prayer and our time and services to be able to speak to us because we want to know our Savior and we want to know him in a deeper way?

Take a few moments and turn your eyes upon Jesus.