

Taking up your cross discussion guide

based on **Mark 8.27-38** (Linked to sermon of 3/3/24)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks

Intro: Who do your friends / colleagues / family say Jesus is?

Read Mark 8.22-33

The healing of the blind man is unique in the gospels, because it occurs in two stages. First, he sees vaguely, then he sees clearly.

How is that like a parable of Peter's own perception of Jesus which comes in the following verses?

At what point did you realise that Jesus is the Messiah – God's anointed King, God's answer to the world's problems? How significant was that moment in your life?

What has helped Peter get to the point of acknowledging that Jesus is the Messiah?

What would help our friends / family / colleagues get to this point?

Dan said that Jesus brought together two separate Old Testament strands of hope – for a Messiah (a conquering King) and for a Suffering Servant (especially in Isaiah 40-55) – and said he was going to fulfil them both.

Why was this so revolutionary – and so offensive to Peter?

How might we fall into Peter's trap and begin rebuking Jesus?

Dan spoke about the danger of 'echo chambers' – focusing on the bits of the gospel narratives which affirm us in our own beliefs (whether we're conservative / liberal / activist / contemplative / red politics / green politics / blue politics / yellow politics etc). How can we avoid this dangerous temptation?

Read Mark 8.34-38

Why do you think Jesus sets the bar of discipleship so high?

Can you give some examples of when you've had to 'deny yourself' or 'take up your cross' as part of following Jesus?

Can you think of examples of people who seem to want to 'save their life' / 'gain the whole world' – yet land up forfeiting their soul?

Jesus encourages us to keep an eternal dimension to our thinking in these verses – why is that important?

Writing about these verses, C.S.Lewis said, "Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, the death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and the death of your whole body in the end: Submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in." Discuss!

Spend some time praying:

- * that God would open the blind eyes of your friends and family to see who Jesus really is
- * that God would give us courage to stand up for him in our 'adulterous and sinful generation'.
- * for Christians around the world who face far more severe persecution for their faith than we do.