

Setting the Mind

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Date: 02 August 2026

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[0:00] Mark chapter 8. One of the great values of preaching through a book of the Bible is that you don't just study individual passages. It helps you to understand the Bible in context. It helps you to understand the overall teaching of the whole book.

You see how the Holy Spirit has woven the whole book together. Now the early church tells us that Mark wrote his gospel from the eyewitness testimony of the apostle Peter.

And that makes what happens here in Mark 8 that much more significant. So for eight chapters leading up to this point, everything has been climbing toward this moment.

Every miracle, every sermon, every confrontation, every question has been leading to Caesarea Philippi, at least in Peter's life.

Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked, who do you say that I am? And Peter said, you are the Christ. Matthew tells us, he said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

[1:17] Because it's Peter's account in the gospel of Mark, that is the pinnacle of Mark's gospel. Everything before this kind of led up to this.

It's been the ascent. But the question has been the whole time, who is Jesus? As they've watched him, as they've ministered beside him, as they've seen him do miracles, as they've listened to his teaching, as they've tried to understand his parables, as they've tried to get all that, the question's been, who is Jesus?

And now Peter answers that way. He gives the answer. It's somewhat the summit. And we're going to linger around these verses for a couple of weeks, because the Mount of Transfiguration is next. The Mount of Transfiguration is the Father confirming that Peter's confession is true. And the Father does it in dramatic fashion. And then we begin the descent, the second half of the gospel of Mark, because Jerusalem is coming.

And what you'll begin to see pretty quickly now is Jesus will speak openly about it. He will speak of his suffering. He will speak of his rejection.

[2:30] He will speak of his death. He'll speak of his resurrection. But we'll journey into the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, through the garden, through the courts, through the cross, to the empty tomb.

Peter got the profession right. Now he needs to know what that means.

And he needs to set his mind on God's plan, not his own plan. And I want to focus this morning on just three verses from Mark. And I really want to hone in on just one verse.

I want you to see this. It's in Mark chapter 8, beginning in verse 31. And it says this. And he began to teach them, speaking of Christ, 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. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, Jesus paid attention to who was listening.

[3:48] He said, get behind me, Satan. You're not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

When he sat down in Caesarea Philippi and asked them, who do you say that I am? He was preparing them for the last days of his ministry.

Unless they knew who they believed in and were persuaded to keep that which they had committed under him against that day, as the great hymn says, as well as 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 12 says that, by the way.

It was going to be rough and shaky times for them. It already was not going to be easy. But if they didn't know who they believed in, they were really going to be in a mess. Not knowing what or who to believe was going to make it worse.

He told them those that would come and scoff him, he told them they'd be questioned. They told him he'd be probed. He'd be driven into a corner.

[4:56] All that would now turn vicious. And the courts that he would go through would be kangaroo. The charges would be exaggerated. The punishment would be death. He told them that when they thought their faith had ran out, that he'd rise again three days later.

Verse 32 says that he said it plainly. He laid it out there, in other words. He shot it straight with them. He didn't hold back. He told them what would happen.

That's quite different than this veil of secrecy that we've seen leading up to this time when he's been speaking. When he spoke through parables, it was often a mystery.

The disciples would walk away and go, well, what was that about? What do you mean by that? And he either heard them or perceived that's what they were saying, and he'd turn around and give them a lesson and explain to them what that parable meant.

Thank God he did, so now we know what it means, too. And there's other ones that we don't have that explanation there. We read it. It takes some explaining to understand it.

[6:00] Not only that, but when he healed folks, he often told them, don't tell anyone. It's hard to do. But he'd tell them, don't tell anyone.

It was all veil. He had some tasks to take care of. And he needed enough time to carry them out, and I believe that's why he did that.

I want you to understand, Christ came to die for the sins of the world and to establish as well. I mean, his key purpose was to die for the sins of the world. But while he was here, he was establishing the infrastructure for the church to thrive after his resurrection and after the ascension. I want you to pay close attention to the gospels, and you'll see that he used every event as a training ground for the apostles to explain to them and how to do what he would say they would do even greater things than he had done.

What did he mean by that? They couldn't do all the things he did because they saw tremendous conversion experiences in the book of Acts. Those were things that didn't happen in the gospels.

[7:15] You see that happening as the church begins to awaken, as powerful things begin to happen. They were witnesses to all of that. When we get to this passage in Mark chapter 8, it's time.

The training that he has given them will be gone soon because he'll ascend into heaven. He's been training them. Now, his longest teaching time of anywhere in Scripture is John 13 through 17, which is the last night he had with them before he went to the garden.

He prepared them for what it would be like when he was no longer with them. But the training had to stop now for the greater task and the one that makes the church possible, and that is to take place on the cross.

And now is the time. And now they must know. And so he wanted them to set their minds. What does that mean? What does it mean to set your mind?

Well, first I want you to see that Jesus set his mind. I want you to see how this happened. Because after he was baptized by John the Baptist, he went into the desert for 40 days, Jesus did.

[8:29] There he fasted and he prayed and he faced great temptations. And I believe the temptations in the desert that he faced had to do more with the direction of his future ministry on the earth than it did with his physical state.

I don't want to take away from anything about fasting for 40 days. No doubt he was hungry. But there was more going on than just food. People had certain expectations of the coming Messiah based upon their interpretation of prophecy.

Based upon their interpretation of prophecy. By the way, that's still true. People have certain expectations of the coming Messiah based upon their interpretation of prophecy.

And in that day, many people expected a provider. Somebody who would give them what they needed. So when he fed the 5,000, it just, they got excited.

They tried hard to pursue him. And remember that he somewhat escaped. He got away from them. Scripture says because they were trying to force him to become king.

[9:36] What was that about? It was about having a providing Messiah. And then some wanted a miracle work. I mean, that's what they wanted.

That was the, not the means, but the end. That's what they were looking for. And then some wanted a conquering king. David, King David was the man as far as leadership in growing that country.

He had his weaknesses. But man, he was a man after God's own heart. And God blessed his reign. And Israel grew strong. And now understand in the setting, they are being oppressed by the Roman Empire.

They want freedom from the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire is choking them out. They want somebody who will conquer. So many expected that. And then some expect everything.

They expect the provision. They expect the miracle worker. They expect the covenant king. And when Jesus is in the desert, Satan is simply tempting Jesus to become the savior that people want him to be.

[10:42] Instead of the savior that the father has sent. The temptations are recorded twice. They're recorded in Matthew chapter 4. They're in Luke chapter 4 as well.

They're the same three temptations, but they're in different orders. But in both of them, the first temptation was to turn the stones to bread. Jesus was hungry when that came up.

But the temptation was more than bread. The temptation was, would he become a savior that would be focused upon the physical needs that people have?

And the answer to that was no. As a matter of fact, Jesus responded to Satan by saying in Matthew chapter 4 verse 4, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone.

But by every word that comes from the mouth of God. But bread is what people were after. As I mentioned earlier, when he fed the 5,000, he left immediately because some were wanting to force him to be king.

[11:40] He didn't fall for that temptation after the feeding of the 5,000. He had already dealt with it in the desert. That was not his mission. The second temptation was Satan urged him to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple.

The highest point is thought to be the temple's southeast corner that's loomed over a cliff that overlooked the Kendron Valley. Should have been a drop of 450 feet below.

And Satan said, jump. Let God save you. Well, can you imagine the crowds that would follow this perspective? Be amazed by that.

Jesus performed many miracles, but his ministry was never about amazing people. That was not what he was about. The miracles always point to a greater message. Always notice that.

Look for the message in the miracle. Powerful. And then finally, that Satan offered him the kingdoms of the world. And as I said, Israel longed for another David who would conquer the nations.

[12:45] The Romans were so overbearing, but Jesus came to establish a different kind of kingdom. As a matter of fact, he said in John 18, verse 36, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting.

That I might not be delivered over to the Jews, but my kingdom is not from the world. So in other words, every temptation that Jesus was offered was an attempt to get him to make a shortcut around the Father's plan.

And the reality is, he could have provided without ever saving. And he could have amazed people without ever redeeming. And he could have ruled without ever going to the cross.

However, that was not what he came to do. And he set his mind on that before ministry ever started. That's why I call it Jesus' seminary experience.

God called me in the ministry, and I went to college to study the Bible. And when I got done, it was time to go to seminary because I had made a commitment to the Lord that I'd prepare myself.

[13:57] Until he showed me different as best I could. I knew where I was going. Preachers went to Texas. Lord, I preached. We rode out to Texas and got on that site. It wasn't for me.

I love Texas. But that wasn't where I was supposed to be. And I knew it. The moment I walked on that campus. Nothing wrong with it, Grace.

But I knew I wouldn't want to look for it. Literally, as we went home, when you hit the bridge that crosses the river in New Orleans, you'll smell Louisiana tea brewing.

And you'll see a steeple that sticks out among that marshland. It's like an Eden in the middle of Sodom.

We literally went to the river in the middle of Sodom. We literally went to the river in the middle of Sodom. I said, let's just go in there. We pulled in there. Drove on that campus.

[15:04] Literally, the grass was greener on that side. I'm just telling you. You know why? Because it's swamped. But anyway, that's not all that I'm out of there. But I just knew that's where I was

supposed to be.

Scared to death in New Orleans. Didn't understand why. I went back home. Put everything I owned in a Honda Civic. Drove 600 miles from my mama and every friend I had.

And wondered what in the world I was doing. And after about five weeks there, I remember sitting out in the Presley's garden. And he had a rose garden or some flower garden or something out there.

With some benches and a fountain in the middle. And I was out there all by myself. And I said, God, why did you bring me down here? Why am I here? I had no idea within just a few months I'd be able to pastor a church.

I never thought at that age, that experience, single and all that stuff. We want somebody like that. God opened up a door for me. To be able to pastor as I studied for that.

[16:09] And he allowed me the time to become clear on what ministry was about.

What my theology was and what my focus was going to be. I gained a greater confidence in God's Word. A greater passion for the pastor. A greater appreciation for the call. And I've done more schooling since then.

But never established like it was there. My friend, clarity is a good thing. And Jesus said, is mine in the desert.

The ministry was gone. That happens again. He did it again in Luke 9, verse 51. One of my favorite passages of Scripture in the Gospel. It's when the days drew near for him to be taken up.

He set his face to go to Jerusalem. Here his ministry soon takes a turn in Jerusalem. And he spent the bulk of his ministry in Galilee. We've studied him going to the Tcapolis.

[17:15] He went on up on that northern shore of the Mediterranean to Tyre and Sudan. We've seen those places. But the last six months of his ministry is in Jerusalem.

And that turn is made here in Mark 8 and 9. He begins to make that turn. The Luke passage that's on the screen says that it was about setting his face.

That does not happen long after our focal passage today. And he told his disciples openly what was coming. And then he went to Jerusalem and openly ministered as the Messiah.

Matter of fact, he came in turning tables. Literally. He was on his way to Calvary. And there was a narrowing of his vision that took place. Then it even becomes more narrow.

And we see the third time in the Garden of Gethsemane. When he said in Luke chapter 22 verse 42, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours.

[18:21] Be done. I want you to understand. I know he did not look forward to the physical agony that he would suffer on the cross. But Old Testament prophecy tells us that the cup that he's talking about was not the physical suffering.

It was a foaming cup of God's wrath. That the illustration that the prophets use is it's like a foaming cup of alcohol that is so consumed and so much of it is consumed by somebody in such an addictive fashion that it ruins their life.

That's the picture that the prophets pay of when God's wrath comes upon somebody. And so when he says, remove this cup from me.

He was talking about the wrath of God. The fallen blood. Understand, there was never a hindrance in Jesus' life. He was not born in sin.

He never sinned. He had perfect communication with the Father until the earth shook and the sky grew dark. And he took upon the sin of the world.

[19:46] And he felt that separation. That was the dread. And he said, not my will. But then he gave it up and said, but yours be done.

The Father didn't spare Jesus the cup of his wrath. And for that, my friend, we ought to celebrate. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21 says, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The dread for Christ was taking on sin of the world. It was taking the separation that comes from sin. However, when he left the garden after agonizing in prayer, his mind and his heart were set out for what needed to happen.

And thank God he went to the cross. And thank God he died for you and me. And thank God he rose again. The Christian lives all of his or her days in the shadow of the cross. As the hymn says, Jesus, keep me near the cross.

Let's be like Christ. Christ set his mind on his mission. So he had every right to look at them and say, You're not setting your mind on the thing of God.

[21:02] But on the things of man. As Christ set his mind on his mission, we set our mind on him. When he tells them in our passage what he is to do, it's more than Peter can take.

Peter's not going to let anybody mess with Jesus. He's not going to do it. I mean, he's high spirited. And when Jesus says, you know, I'm going to die.

They're coming after me and I'm going to die. Peter says, no, I'll cut their ear off. I believe the only reason Peter cut the man's ear off in the garden was because he missed. I believe he was aiming for his neck.

He wasn't going to tolerate it. And he didn't want Jesus talking like that. And when Jesus heard him say that, I believe he thought about what the temptation was in the desert.

The devil was always throwing him off. He wasn't throwing him off. He was trying to throw him off. What his ministry was going to be. And he realized that didn't come from Peter. He wasn't calling Peter, Satan.

[22:18] He was telling him, you got to get Satan behind you. And the reality is, verse 33 tells us that Jesus saw the disciples and watched him.

He orders Satan to get behind him. And so, because the reality is, either you're following the Lord or you're following the evil one. Peter's ignorant words were like a follower of the evil one that was attempting to tempt Jesus to back away from his God-commissioned responsibility.

And then he makes a statement that I just want to take a few moments here to unpack for the rest of our time together and see what we have. When he said, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

Scripture is clear that the way one sets his mind makes a world of difference. As he set his mind toward ministry, so we are to set our minds toward ministry.

What is it God would have you to do to serve in his kingdom? That's a question that Christians ought to ask. What do I need to be doing in service for the Lord?

[23:44] Not to pay him back, but in faithfulness. He did not do. Jesus did not do what he did to appease people.

He did it to please the Father. He did not do what he did to marvel people, but to give honor and praise to the Father. He did not do what he did to conquer the whole world, but to save it.

And my friend, we don't need to appease people, and we don't need to marvel people, and we don't need to conquer people. We need to live our lives for Christ.

Christ, self-taught Chinese Christian writer, Watchman Nee, wrote a little book. You could read it this afternoon.

Well, some of you could. You could read it this afternoon. It says, sit, walk, stand. Maybe this is what it means to set our mind.

[24:48] Oh, God. First, we sit. We realize that all we have in the Lord, that all we have is in the Lord, and we spend time with him privately.

We spend time with him prayerfully. We spend time with him devotionally, and we allow the Holy Spirit to remind us what Ephesians tells us, and that is that we sit with him in heavenly places.

We need to first realize all that we have when we have Christ. And you need to do it every day.

Don't tell me you don't have time. You're too busy not to pray. Before you start your day, when my kids were young, I'd get up early and have my time with the Lord.

And my goal every day was not to blow everything I committed before we ever left the house. Let me all understand that. First, we sit.

[26:06] Heck, you know what it is. That it is. And then we walk. You can't stay there forever.

You've got to get up from your time with the Lord. And because of where we are placed with him, we walk. In him.

Watchman D was studying Ephesians when he wrote this. And Ephesians is clear about this. We walk in a manner worthy of the calling that he's placed upon us as his children. That's what Ephesians 4.1 says.

We walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us. That's Ephesians 5.2. We walk as children of light. We walk away from impurity.

We walk away from empty words. We walk away from darkness. We pursue what is good and what is right and what is true. That's what Ephesians 5.8 and 9 tell us.

[27:04] We walk in the Lord. And lastly, we stand. When the battle comes and the battles will come, we stand.

We put on the armor of God and we stand. And having done all, we stand. Ephesians 6 just eats that up. And says it again and again. Stand against the evil one.

James 4 tells us, resist him and he'll flee from you. And I want you to recognize something. Peter makes one of the strongest statements ever made in Scripture.

I've just told you how the Gospel of Mark is wrapped around his quote that you are the Christ. And then, almost immediately, he says something else of utter foolishness.

He rebukes Christ. Satan will take us from our high point. Turn us on a dime.

[28:11] And what Jesus spoke of is not what Peter wanted. That is not what he wanted. He didn't want anybody to hurt Jesus.

He didn't want anything to happen to Jesus. He wanted Christ to reign, wanted to be with him in that reign. He didn't want anything coming away. Folks, it's not about what we want. It's not about what he wanted.

It's not about what we want. It's not about what we understand. It's not. I can't answer all your questions. I can't. I can't answer all the questions in my own life.

I don't know why things happen like they happen. I don't understand all that. It's not about having our questions answered. It's not about getting everything we want.

It's about who we've trusted our lives with. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Philippians 3.

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[29:20] To forget our ways. And in the power of God to walk out of the strongholds of the evil one has upon our lives that weaken us.

The same Lord that faced temptation and conquered it is the same Lord that lives in believers and gives us the strength that we need to walk away from the sinful patterns of our life.

To leave the past behind. To get Satan behind us. And then sit. Sit with the Lord in the high places. And then walk. Walk in His ways. And then stand. When the battle comes, and if you're not in the midst of it right now, it'll come.

Stand strong in Christ. Sit. Sit. Walk. Stand. I believe that's what it means to set our minds on Christ.

[30:29] And to get Satan behind us. That's not always easy. It's not always easy.

When I was a teenager, I began to notice. A little later than that, I took it more seriously and I got it checked out. And I have something called intermittent extrastropia.

I don't want to say I'm a pastor with a wandering eye. That don't sound right. But I got an eye that just, both of them do it a little bit, but one of them really does it.

I've had surgery and it corrected about 50% of the sores. But every time I turn my head, one eye focuses a little slower than the other. And I see double.

It only takes about a nanosecond for it to fix itself. I don't really think about it since I've been talking about it. It's happened about three times. I don't really think about it a lot. It used to be a lot slower, but for the surgeon people too, I'm looking at it.

[31:34] If I'm ever looking past you, I'm not looking past you. But after the surgery, when the doctor was analyzing it, he said, I see that you still have the traits, but he said, you recover so quickly.

I don't know that I've ever seen anybody refocus as fast as you do. Sometimes eyes blind out something, but I don't. I see double. And he said, you fix it really fast.

It's become my prayer. Lord, at any time my focus is not where it needs to be, that I'll fix it as fast as my brain fixes my brain.

Lord, let me set my mind on you and let nothing end your life.

Now that begins by surrendering your life to the Lord. And if you've never done that, there's no church affiliation that's going to help with that. There's no ancestry that's going to help you with that.

[33:07] It's a personal surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. You've never given your heart life to Christ. You need to do that today. Before you leave here. Urgently.

You need to give your life to Christ. And if you've done that, but you've never acknowledged that publicly, it's been a private matter to you, I want you to know that's a hindrance in your life that's keeping you from setting your mind on what it needs to be set on.

And you need to be obedient and follow Him. By His commission and by His example, He shows us the importance. Maybe God's drawing in this church.

This is where you know you're not big on being recognized, but you know that's where God would have you to be. If you know that's where God would have you to do, you need to obey Him. And there's not a person in this place today that don't need to hear what I'm about to say.

We all need to recommit our lives today to set our minds on Him to let nothing come in the way of us keeping our minds set upon Him.

[34 : 25] Man, it sure does help Him when we sit with Him. It won't happen unless we walk with Him.

And we'll fail if we don't stand with Him. I want you to know that Satan loves to work on alienation. If he can make you feel alone by yourself, he can get you down.

And I want you to know today, you're not alone. You're not alone. I mean that in a lot of ways, and I don't have time to explain it.

The commonality of our difficulties is much more than you would ever imagine. I can promise you that. I can promise you that. They really are. You're not that different.

Some of you are. But you're not that different, you know? We all struggle. It comes about.

[35 : 29] The fruit of it happens in different ways, and it's all customized and those type things. But the categories are just pure and very common.

You're not alone. You're not alone. You've got a congregation of people that are wonderful, and they love you, and they'll do whatever they can for you.

And we'll stand with you. We'll sit with you if you need us to. If you don't know what it means to sit with the Lord, come sit with me this week. Let me explain to you what that means.

We'll walk with you. And when needed, we'll stand with you. You've got a church-loving family that cares about you, and you get as much as you put into it.

You really do. But if there were none of us here, you would not be alone. You would not be alone.

[36 : 29] The strength that we have in the midst of our struggle is the common bond that we have in Christ Jesus. That's the strength of the church. And so it's all about Christ.

And He'll be with you through it all. Set your mind on Christ. Refocus on Him.

It'll become a lot more natural the more you do it. Set your mind on Christ.

Heavenly Father, lead us right now to be obedient, to follow You in any and every way that You have us. Father, we love You dearly.

And we thank You for Your love for us. Give us the focus to respond to Your obediently today. In Jesus' name, amen.