

Mark 8:31-38

³¹Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things; be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the experts in the law; be killed; and after three days rise again. ³²He was speaking plainly to them. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But after turning around and looking at his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men.”

³⁴He called the crowd and his disciples together and said to them, “If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶After all, what good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸In fact, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Sticker Shock

I.

What gives you sticker shock? Take the whole family to a ball game and buy the tickets, drinks for all, and a few other items at the concession stand and you might have sticker shock. Parents looking ahead to a college education for their children have sticker shock when they read the total cost involved for tuition, room and board, and all kinds of other various fees for just one semester of higher education.

I had that sticker shock feeling when I read an article about the Ford Motor Company’s difficulties in cranking out enough Lincoln Navigators to keep up with demand. One article said sales are up 132% for these vehicles, mostly in the highest trim levels costing \$90,000-100,000. Sales would be even higher if they could build the vehicles fast enough.

There have always been super-expensive cars out there which only the very rich are able to afford. Every winter many of the rest of us trek out to DeVos Place to see the Michigan International Auto Show to ogle some of those cars and wonder what it would be like to drive one for a day. Too many Navigators are being built to be purchased only by the wealthy. Many are being bought by middle class Americans.

II.

When a person purchases something expensive like a new car or a college degree, you’re urged to get a loan to lessen the sticker shock. If you buy the more “modest” new car at \$50,000, and stretch your payments over five years, you will “only” pay about \$900/month.

Just before our text Jesus had asked the disciples: “Who do people say that I am?” (Mark 8:27, EHV). The crowds that followed Jesus everywhere had all kinds of misconceptions, but what about the disciples? “Who do you say I am?” [Jesus] asked them. Peter answered him, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29, EHV). Christ means “the Anointed One.” Peter and the others recognized that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah—that he was sent by God to restore mankind’s relationship with the Heavenly Father. The disciples recognized Jesus for who he is.

Then came the stunner. Mark records that “Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things” (Mark 8:31, EHV). One little word in that sentence is very

important—the word “must.” The Greek word is only three letters, so it might be even easier for a person to overlook. The word indicates a strong necessity. What would happen to Jesus, the very Son of God, was not something that was optional. It is not optional because sin requires a life as payment. God’s Old Testament Ceremonial Laws which governed Israel’s worship taught them that. We mentioned on Ash Wednesday that 1200 animals a year were part of the public sacrifices for the sins of the people. All those animal sacrifices really didn’t accomplish the forgiveness of sins—they merely pointed to the steep price that was necessary—they pointed ahead to the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God—the Lamb of God.

“Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things; be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the experts in the law; be killed; and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31, EHV). The religious authorities would reject Jesus because of sticker shock. For them it seemed that grace came too easily—that grace was cheap. Their whole system indicated a much higher price—keeping the law. A person had to spend a lifetime perfecting their ability to keep all the laws of Moses very carefully. Ironically, their own price was far too cheap. Their attempts to keep God’s law were imperfect, at best. They could never hope to pay the real price. Like a car buyer taking out a long-term loan, their purchase was underwater before they even attempted to make a first payment.

“It is necessary,” Jesus said, “that the Son of Man... be killed.” Sin requires a life as payment. Paul said it to the Romans: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23, EHV). There is no shortcut when it comes to the sticker shock of sin. The cost is extremely high—so high no human being could ever hope to make a payment. You see, the death truly required for sin is eternal death in hell. No one could ever hope to satisfy that kind of payment. No one except Jesus. From the cross Jesus cried out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34, EHV). Jesus was suffering the pain of hell. God was abandoned by God as the sticker shock price that was necessary for our salvation.

“It is necessary that after three days he would rise again,” said Jesus. The disciples really didn’t catch this part. All they could hear was the astronomical price Jesus was saying must be paid for sin.

III.

“Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him” (Mark 8:32, EHV). Like a buyer at the car lot trying to barter the price down, at least a little bit, Peter expressed his severe sticker shock. You can hear the outrage in his voice as he tried to barter the price down, as Matthew records: “May you receive mercy, Lord! This will never happen to you” (Matthew 16:22, EHV).

His reaction sounds very pious, doesn’t it? “Come on, now, Jesus! *That* kind of price isn’t *really* necessary. Let’s go in your office and see if we can’t knock a few dollars off. Surely *something* can be done to reduce the cost!”

Isn’t this the way Christians today *still* react to Jesus’ frank explanation of the cost of sin? In self-righteous outrage you compare the sticker price of yourself to others. The other guy’s list of flaws increases the price Jesus had to pay for *him*, but *your* model doesn’t have so many sins. *You’re* okay. Jesus shouldn’t have to pay as much for *you*. Jesus just needs to give you a little boost and you can make the rest up on your own.

“Jesus rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You do not have your mind set on the things of God, but the things of men’” (Mark 8:33, EHV). In that moment, Peter’s outrage actually was serving the purposes of Satan. *Satan* was always tempting Jesus, as we spoke about last week. Satan wanted Jesus to abandon the quest for the salvation of the

world. If he could get Jesus either to think that such a high cost wasn't necessary or that the price was just too far out of the budget, he would win.

"Certainly my plans are not your plans, and your ways are not my ways, declares the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8, EHV). Only God himself could have come up with a plan that actually would *work* to bring about the salvation of all mankind. Satan wanted Jesus to have the thoughts of men, not the thoughts of God. If he could twist a little sticker shock into the mind of Jesus he would win.

IV.

"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37, EHV). Nothing. There is nothing anyone can give in exchange for their soul. The shocking sticker price is too high.

The shocking sticker price was necessary, but it has been paid! It is paid in full—there is no outstanding balance, no payment book, no automatic withdrawal plan to be set up. The blood of Jesus, the Son of God, was sufficient to pay the price for the sins of the whole world. You *have* forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

"If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34, EHV). The Evangelical Heritage Version translation is much better than the NIV's choice of the word "must." Must, in the sense of "it is necessary," is what Jesus said about the work he would do. It was necessary that he suffer and die and rise again for the sins of the world. Jesus is not saying it is necessary that you do these things in order to be a Christian. He is, instead, using a gospel imperative. Just do it.

All that was necessary for our salvation Jesus has already done. It is finished, just as he said from the cross. Nothing further remains for us to do. No price tag is still pasted in the window of our salvation. This gospel imperative simply indicates that *he* enables *us* to respond to his grace. We do that by denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, and following him. The Apostle Paul puts it this way: "He died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15, EHV).

The sticker shock of salvation includes the sticker shock idea that Jesus invites you to follow him and to serve him. "If anyone wants to follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it" (Mark 8:34-35, EHV). Whoever would deny Christ to seek a spectacular earthly existence will lose the realities of eternal life in heaven Jesus has already purchased for them. American Christians today aren't really asked to sacrifice much of this world's existence, but we still live as believers looking to the far better existence we will enjoy with him in heaven.

Some people look at our Christian Day School and have sticker shock. Christian Education costs a few dollars—more than a few, some would say. Holy Trinity congregation as a whole pays a great deal to educate the students of our school. In addition to the costs borne by the whole congregation, parents pay tuition to send their children here.

We do so as part of the privilege of following Christ. There is no sticker shock, but great joy, in knowing that there have been many hundreds of children who have learned at the feet of our Savior at our school. They have learned of the great price he willingly paid that *they* might have eternal life. The sticker shock of Lent was absorbed by Jesus so that we would have a passion to deny ourselves and follow him. Amen.