

Receive the Savior God Sent

✦ **Determined in suffering** (vv.30-32)

✦ **Humble in serving** (vv.33-37)

In the name of Jesus, the Savior sent by God, dear fellow disciples and servants of our Lord:

Anyone in customer service knows how hard people are to please. Multiply that a million times in matters of the heart and spirit. Americans raised on Sesame Street want their feelings validated in spite of the cost to truth and reality. We all feel we know better what kind of s(S)avior we need. Jewish opinions about the Messiah-Christ in Jesus' day certainly illustrate the point. Of all the disciples, Peter most of all echoes the prevailing attitudes then and now. Peter demanded a conquering hero, not a suffering Savior.

Some of you will remember the first polio vaccines. My uncle had polio, so I knew the importance, but I sure had a preference about the delivery mechanism. Roll up your sleeve. See the scar from that multi-needled gun? A sour nurse would hold up your arm. You felt as if were about to be shot. Mine hurt for weeks. So when they came out with the pink colored sugar cubes, I would stand in line for those. See why we have trouble to **Receive the Savior God Sent**? We want the sugar not the shot.

✦ **Determined in suffering** (vv.30-32)

Want to see an illustration? Here's how someone really good can't satisfy sinners. Look at a map of Jesus' travels in the weeks before our text. Mark doesn't say exactly where Jesus healed the demon-possessed boy. His father prayed that classic prayer: "**Lord, I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!**" (Mark 9:17-29) Jesus kept moving and commanding folks not to tell how He helped them. People had a different idea what He should be doing. He refused to be pinned down by secular Zionism. They wanted a military hero, a bread king. Jesus is all the Savior we need, not a utopian dream.

Can you sense how shocking this must have been for Jesus' disciples? If you found the perfect car only to have it blow up on the freeway, it doesn't even come close. Your dream house in a neighborhood destroyed a few months later by a tornado? That's not half the trauma Jesus' followers felt. He kept saying this, but they did not want to hear it. Peter had already been called "**Satan**" just for disagreeing with Jesus when He first brought it up. (Mark 8:31-38) Now He's saying it again: "**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.**" *But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.*

Doesn't it seem strange that Jesus' disciples asked him about everything else, but "**were afraid to ask him**" about His death and resurrection? Strange until we remember we don't like to think about matters of the soul either. Our Savior kindly keeps bringing us back to the cross, to the empty tomb. He was **Determined in suffering** to bring us to His glorious resurrection and ascension. He wants us to follow Him home to heaven. But sometimes our Master Teacher must ask His students, "**Are you so dull?**" (Mark 7:18) He keeps teaching, but like His first disciples, we just don't get it. All Jesus' disciples must confess blind ignorance (Isaiah 42:19) as long as we live in this sinful flesh. Only in heaven shall I "**know fully, even as I am fully known.**" (1 Corinthians 13:12) All the lights will go on in glory with God.

And that, dear friends and fellow disciples, is why Jesus is so patient with us, so **Determined in suffering**. He will not flinch or turn away. This is why the Father sent Him. This is why Jesus came to this earth. If you can admire police and firemen, search and rescue, or special forces rescuing a mother and her children from terrorists, see how your Savior rescued you from a fate far worse. When your determination falters, let Jesus inspire you to patient endurance. He is still...

✠ Humble in serving (vv.33-37)

It really seems to me that Jesus was being exceptionally kind to His disciples. Only one English translation picks up on this from the original Greek: *And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.* (Mark 9:33f ESV) Jesus seems to be giving them more credit than they deserved for “*discussing*.” Mark shows a selfish family quarrel.

What amazes me most, ever since Jesus “*began to teach them*” about His death and resurrection (8:31), is His patience. The cross is looming, its agony tearing at His soul, but His closest disciples don’t have a clue. Their greatest concern is not to ask about His death and resurrection, but to try to settle their own conceited dreams of grandeur. This is something I wish I did not have to admit, but it happens every time I preach. I’m looking in the mirror here. So are you. We’re looking at our own personal, sometimes professional pride, and it’s not pretty. We slide into these ruts even when our sanctified hearts try to avoid them. Everything about Jesus’ humble service shows we are just the opposite.

That’s why I’m so glad that Jesus died for me! He did not argue with His heavenly Father about leaving heaven for this rescue mission. Jesus volunteered to die for our sins and win eternal life for us. And Jesus did not come to take our debt of guilt on Himself, only to make us pay Him back. That’s what Mormonism teaches, and that’s why Mormons cannot escape their guilt no matter how hard they work for the perfection God demands. Society would be better if more people matched their earnest efforts, but civic righteousness cannot bring you closer to God. He still says, “*All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*” (Isaiah 64:6) He still calls Jesus, “*The LORD our righteousness.*” (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16) And Jesus’ words still free us from all guilt: “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30) Our heavenly Father still shows He is pleased with Jesus’ sacrifice in our place. He raised Jesus from the dead because we are justified, acquitted of our sins and crimes. (Romans 4:25) As far as God is concerned, it’s just as if we’d never committed a single sin, but did right every time. When we trust in Him, God sees us as good as Jesus.

We don’t want to argue when we **Receive the Savior God Sent**. *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”* Isn’t that backwards from the world’s view? God must give us miraculous new hearts to see this His way. He works this miracle by preaching the Gospel. This may seem foolish, but as one old Lutheran pastor put it:

“The Word of God alone can take hold of a man’s heart and renew it entirely, change his entire life and manner of thinking. And the same effect may be observed in the history of the Church. A mere handful of disciples assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem has grown to a body whose size is such as to be known to God only, although even the number of those that profess Christianity is very large. That fact is a source of constant comfort to all believers, whether they be pastors or not: their labor cannot be in vain, since they have the living Word to deal with.”

God’s Word works character. And some wise man pointed out that real character shows by how you treat people who can’t pay you back. See how Jesus illustrates this in our last verse? Taking a child in his arms, He said, “*Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.*” Receive Jesus as easily as you would take up a little child into your arms. **Receive the Savior God Sent. Be Humble in serving.**

“When a pastor has preached the Word, publicly and from house to house, he has done that work for which he has been called. Worrying about results is as foolish as it is useless. The power of God is in the Word, and it rests with Him to bless the proclamation of the Gospel according to His promise that His Word will not return to Him void, Is.55,10.11. God must give the increase, 1 Cor.3,6.7.”¹

Receive the Savior God Sent. You are one a trophy of His grace and goodness. Amen.

¹ Both quotes from Kretzmann, Paul E. *Popular Commentary Of The Bible*. St. Louis, Missouri: CPH, 1924. NT I, p. 184.