



## **Mark 8:31-38**

Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”



I am a control freak. I feel most secure when life aligns with my plans. Sometimes I catch myself thinking that I have the only right answer, and if people would only do things *my way*, the world would be much improved.

Jesus was teaching his disciples about what was to come—great suffering, persecution at the hands of the religious authorities, a violent death, and a miraculous resurrection—when Peter interrupted him, pulled him aside, and rebuked him.

*Jesus, what are you thinking? I imagine him saying. This is a horrible plan! There must be a better way.*

And then comes Jesus's sharp response, shattering Peter's illusions of wisdom. "Get behind me, Satan! You are too consumed with earthly things."

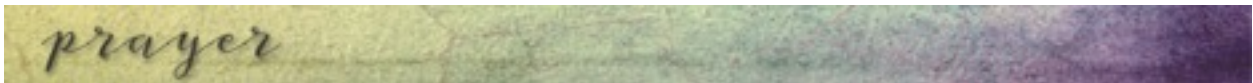
I wonder how often Jesus mutters this under his breath at me.

Jesus gathers the crowd and tells them that anyone who would follow him into the Kingdom of God would need to deny themselves. If they were willing to lose control for the sake of the gospel—to stop clinging to comfort and safety and even life itself—then they would find new life. But if they insisted on holding their lives in clenched fists, they would find that it was already gone.

There have been moments that I have felt it would be easier to actually lose my life than to lose *control* of my life. But this is what I sense Christ asking of me—to let go of my own plan and follow his. He desires to give me life more boundless than my hands can contain.



- Amelia Barnes



*God, in this season of Lent, as we focus on control and discipline, help us to be open. Help us see that the offering you desire most is our trusting surrender. Teach us to relinquish the death-grip we hold on our lives that we may flourish and grow, that our strength can be redirected toward the work of your Kingdom, and that our arms would be free to embrace the humbling wonder of your surprise ending. Amen.*