



Take Up Your Cross Daily

Luke 9:18-27

Week of December 26, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Luke 9:18-27
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen." Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:18-27, ESV

Sermon Notes

If we are authentic disciples of Jesus Christ, if we are choosing to follow Him, then we do so in our following Him in His life, in His death, in His resurrection, and in His ascension.

The Coming of Christ... now what?

We are fresh off the heels of one of the most fun seasons in the calendar; Christmas. This event where we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ sets down a foundation of our lives never being the same. Jesus, being fully God, took on flesh and came into the world. He rightfully deserved the place of honor on the throne and yet came to draw us to be with Him forever. We delight in the coming of this baby boy, as we should for the glory of God is being revealed, and then are left with the question "Okay, now what?"

For many of us, our lives reflected this pattern as well. We came to church on Christmas Eve, went to bed, woke up the next morning only to open presents and give gifts to ourselves while completely forgetting the purpose behind this celebration finds its foundation in God who took on flesh. God, in His transcendence and His far off-ness, drew near and personal to us in immanence. And all of this traversing of God's Kingship to His humanity expresses the grace of God for those who are in Him.

The call of the Christian is not to simply marvel at the birth of eight pound six ounce baby Jesus, though we should absolutely delight in the coming of a King. The call of the Christian is to follow Him as disciples. A disciple is simply that, one who follows another and submits their life to the teaching and authority of another. To follow Jesus Christ as His disciples means we die to ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him daily.

Knowing Who Jesus Christ Is Provides The Foundation For Our Discipleship

- Luke 9:18-20
- To follow Christ, then, is to first ask the question "Who do you say He is?"
- Christ asking the disciples "Who do you say I am?"
- According to Matthew 16, this took place in Caesarea Philippi, a place known for various religious temples, notably the god Pan and even to the unknown God as people sought to cover their bases by sacrificing to this general unknown in case they missed one.
- The world offers many explanations of who Jesus is in an attempt to define the world through a lens of our own understanding. The world will reduce Him to a good teacher, a man with great ideas, or just outright ignore Him and write Him off.
 - Seen most clearly as people attempt to redefine the word love and twist the scripture so it meets our standard of what love is.
 - Love, though, is defined by God who is the emodiment of love. Love is not something God does but something that God IS. It expands from God's nature and God's being.
- Yet, if Christ truly is just a good teacher, then we can disagree, we can challenge, and we can go in a different direction.
- Thus, Peter's proclamation at this point, in the face of immense cultural opposition is to exclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the King and Ruler of the Universe and God incarnate.
- Even as we rejoice in the coming of Jesus Christ, we must also know that this God in flesh would not experience the happiest of times but that suffering would result.

- The cross of Christ is a brutal suffering that the Son of God willfully endured for our sake as a propitiation of our sins.
- The coming of Jesus Christ absolutely had been a moment of joy, yet there would quickly come a time when suffering would be necessary for the sake of mankind followed by an eternal joy.
- So our question then is the same question as Jesus to the disciples. The world absolutely will try to reduce to make irrelevant the coming of the Savior of the world. But who do we say He is?
- The root of discipleship and of following Jesus Christ is that we rightfully proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- Likewise, will our testimony of who the Lord is change in the circumstances of our lives. Just as Jesus endured pain, ridicule and shame, we will endure a taste of this pain, ridicule and shame.
- *John 15:18-19* If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
- Too many people use persecution as an excuse to give up the faith because it got difficult at one point. We abandon our faith by either failing to continue to follow Christ and became these quiet church mice who don't do anything outside of church for their faith or we become an angry narcissistic annoyance that presents a law based faith without any means of grace.
- If we are authentic disciples of Jesus Christ, if we are choosing to follow Him, then we do so in our following Him in His life, in His death, in His resurrection, and in His ascension.
- Yet, we know that if Jesus is God in the flesh, who descended from the heavens to be with us, then anything we might experience for His sake is absolutely worth it.
- Knowing who Jesus Christ is, not intellectually but knowing with intimacy and affection lays down the foundation of disciples for us to willingly lay down our own lives to follow Him.

Denying Yourself

- *Luke 9:23* And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

To Save Your Life, Lose Your Life

- *Luke 9:24* For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.
- Jesus' words to the disciples seem counter intuitive at first. If someone is looking to save their life they must be willing to lose it first. There is a call to willfully put down our lives, our preferences and our desires in order to take hold of the true life that is offered in Jesus Christ.
- People have often said to follow the heart. Emphatically, do not do this. A heart separated from the source of life is not one able to produce life, only counterfeits. In fact, it is because of the condition of the heart that we must be willing to lose our lives in order to be saved.
- *Jeremiah 17:9-10* The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."
- Jeremiah spoke the condition of the heart. The heart deeply know the will of God apart from any move of the Spirit. The heart craves sin. It craves rebellion. It craves all the things that send us to death.
- Yet, this is also not saying that if we clean up our heart, then God will bless us. There is

no condition of the heart that God finds pleasing. The message of “clean yourself up and do better so God will love you” only further burdens the disciple with the righteous requirements of the law that you will never, ever be able to meet. Dirty cannot clean up dirty and somehow become clean.

- To follow Christ as a disciple, then, is not that we clean ourselves up but that we follow Jesus Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
- In dying to ourselves with the realization that we are idol factory, sinful beings, and crying out for our need of a Savior that we can take hold of the life that God offers us. We kill the heart to allow work of God through the Holy Spirit within us to take root.
- *Ezekiel 36:26-27 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*
- Looking to recitify the condition of the heart's evilness? Give it up for the sake of making room for the renewed and better heart that comes from relationship with Jesus Christ.

Consumerism

- *Luke 9:25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?*
- The biggest threat to Christianity within the walls of Christianity is to indulge our western bias to turn our faith into a customer service relationship. We want to come to church and be passive observers for an hour to 90 minutes and then check list Christianity for the week.
- It's a sad purposeless experience of life to simply be passive consumers in life when Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords invites us to participate in the mission of God throughout the world while understanding that because our victory is secured in Jesus Christ, wthere is no chance of losing.
- Viewing Christianity and faith as a constant consumer will never produce a vibrant faith. Furthermore, it will never produce any fulfillment but simply leave the Christian chasing after whatever meets their felt needs while ignoring the state of the heart.
- Consuming Christianity will only produce a false religious experience and create spiritual junkies out of people only looking for the next high to serve them.
- Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit, so when we behave as if all we want in a church is warm feelings that spoon feed us what we think we want is asking for a church that is completely devoid of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- When the Spirit first enters us, do you think He comes into this nice neat tidy home? Absolutely not! It would be ridiculously to think that the case. It's an absolute mess. Yet, the Spirit continues to work in and move in our lives so that the mess of our heart and soul is healed.
- When we truly get into the dirt and grim of our lives, the Holy Spirit calls out of the ideols we have erected in our hearts that at the time we “knew” were the best thing for us.
- Furthermore, the thing that struck me the most about this as I considered consumerism and its draw is how deceptively simple it is to fall into. The natural drift of the world pushes people away from

Take Up Your Cross (Part 1)

The Cross of Christ

- So we take up our cross. Yet, keep in mind, the entire purpose of being a disciple is that we join and identify with Jesus Christ in his life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
- In taking up our cross daily is simply referring to the act of dying to ourselves and putting to death the remnants of our sin by bringing them to the Lord.
- The cross is not our own but we find our purpose and being in the completed work of Jesus Christ and His cross.
- *Matthew 11:29-30 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*
- Following Christ takes up our cross and joins Jesus Christ knowing that His burden is easy and his yoke is light.

Mourn The Dead

- One of the best things we can do is to spend time and mourn the dead. Mourning in a sense releases the dead instead of clinging to it. Part of taking of our cross, then, is to mourn the death of the old person.
- The old person is gone. Our lives are forever changed. Holding on to the dead will freeze a person where they are in their growth and development and they will never be able to fully move on with the new person.
- So mourn your old person.
 - Mourn the death of late nights with too much drinking that while fun for a moment comes at the expense of family, health, and relationships.
 - Mourn the death of a life fueled by lust and pornography that seeks instant gratification and validation at the expense of the heart and soul of both us and the other person.
 - Mourn the death of needing to be the smartest person in the room wrapped up in pride and arrogance that only pushes people away.
 - Mourn the death of being the constant victim wrapped up in an identity that God never intended for us to have.
 - Mourn the death of grief, shame, and hurt in a world that seeks to make us all victims with no hope.
 - Mourn the death of sickness and illness and brokenness because we know that when we take up our cross, we die with Christ only to be raised by Him.
 - Mourn the death of sin whose claws had dug deep into our flesh with a firm grasp on our souls until Christ came into the world and died in our place.
- If we are being honest, we mourn the death of that which had already used us up and left us for death and we come alive to the love of Jesus Christ that restores and renews our soul as we abide in Him.

If we get to the end of this sermon and this that I have preached a dark message devoid of any hope and this is simply a message of you need to die and do better to earn and merit the love of God then you have missed the point. By the works of Christ done on your behalf, you are free from the grasp of sin. You are free from the sin that so easily entangles. Live daily as people who have put to death the flesh. Follow Jesus Christ as disciples and be united with Him in His life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. *Romans 6:5 "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."*

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What are the three things that Jesus tells the disciples to do if they are to follow Him? How would you describe each of these things?
- What are some of the differences between the old heart and the new heart? Why is it important to deny the desires of the old heart? What types of things does the old heart produce?
- What are some of the risks of indulging our consumeristic senses and ideals? Where does the desire to be consumers only of the faith and not active participants come from?
- Where do you see the ongoing struggle against clinging to our sin rather than putting it to death? Why do we tend to try and hold on to our sin and rebellion?
- How does denying ourselves and putting to death our old heart allow us to follow Jesus Christ? Why must we be willing to abandon the old for the sake of following Jesus Christ?

Challenge For The Week

The first step in following Jesus Christ comes with the proclamation that Jesus Christ is King and Lord over all. We submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and follow Him.

- This week, stop and consider where in your life you are what seem to keep coming back to. Take some time and submit these to God and discuss with your discipleship relationship partner.
- God also places people in your life who need to take their first step in relationship with Him. Who do you know that you can share the greatest news of the greatest gift ever given? When can you talk to them about the Gospel?

