

Theme: Disciples are called to follow Jesus, which means they must deny themselves and take up their cross, enduring persecution and suffering in this age while looking forward to the eternal reward they will be granted at the return of Christ.

I. Intro - Septimus Severus, Perpetua, & Felicity

- A. Severus - Roman Emperor around 200 AD; powerful; expanded Empire; promoted syncretistic religion
- B. Perpetua & Felicity - rich woman & slave martyred in his reign during games in honor of Severus' birthday
- C. Perpetua and Felicity died with joy - looking to an eternal reward! Honored on many church calendars!
- D. Severus words as he was dying - "I have been everything and everything is nothing. A little urn will contain all that remains of one for whom the whole world was too little."
- E. Jesus explains why in today's text

II. The Way of the Cross

- A. Jesus was walking the way of the Cross
He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. Mark 8:31
 - 1. This was shocking and Peter rebuked Jesus - and was rebuked by Jesus!
 - 2. This was all laid out in the Old Testament
 - 3. The Messianic King had to walk the way of the cross, and only then would He receive the crown.
 - 4. It was imperative that the disciples understand this because a wrong view of Messiahship would lead to a wrong view of discipleship.

B. The pattern for ALL disciples of Jesus

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Mark 8:34

- 1. Jesus says the way of the cross is for ALL disciples
 - a. He calls the crowd - they must know this too!
 - b. Jesus says if ANYONE wants to be a disciple they must walk the way of the cross.
 - c. This is not a second stage for super-followers or "saints" - this is the entrance gate for ALL disciples
- 2. Following Jesus on the way of the cross
Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Mark 8:34
 - a. Come after Me, follow Me - Same Greek verb
 - b. This is the essence of discipleship - following Jesus.
 - c. Because a disciple is a follower, since Jesus walks the way of the cross, so must every disciple. To refuse the way of the cross is to renounce being a disciple of Jesus.

C. The way of the cross (After Hours for other aspects)

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Mark 8:34

- 1. The way of the cross is the way of self-denial
 - a. One can not follow Jesus apart from self-denial
 - b. This is not denying things to myself; it is the very denial of my self, my own desires, my own identity, to take up the identity and desires of the Kingdom.

- c. This runs directly counter to our age where the purpose of life is self-fulfillment, finding, embracing, and expressing my “authentic self”!
2. The way of the cross leads to suffering, rejection, and sometimes death
- a. Jesus said He would suffer, be rejected, and killed!
 - b. Disciples should not expect anything different!
 - c. The cross was not a piece of jewelry or a metaphor for unpleasant experiences, but rather the ultimate instrument of death wielded by the Romans to kill anyone who would not embrace Roman rule.
 - d. Those who follow Jesus, denying themselves and the ways of this age, will always find themselves being pressured to abandon the way of the cross.
 - e. This may lead to social rejection, loss of prestige, loss of employment, imprisonment, or even death.
3. The way of the cross is experiencing the same rejection and suffering that Jesus did!
- a. Again the call is to follow Jesus!
 - b. He walked the way of the cross, and received suffering, rejection, and even death - and disciples must expect the same.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. Matthew 10:24-25 ESV
 - c. This means when followers of Jesus suffer rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom, they are not forsaken by God: they are receiving the same treatment as Jesus did - and they will receive the same reward!

III. The Benefits of the Way of the Cross

- A. Jesus lists four reasons why disciples should embrace the way of the cross
- ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Mark 8:35-38 (ESV)
1. The Greek has four clauses/sentences beginning with the word “for” (γὰρ)
 2. The ESV shows this clearly - “for” at the beginning of vv35, 36, 37, and 38
 3. Jesus is giving four rationales or benefits of walking the way of the cross
 4. We have seen the cost - here is why it is worth it!
- B. The paradox of finding and losing life
- For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. Mark 8:35 (ESV)
1. We think the way to save life is through self-seeking, but this actually causes us to lose life!
 2. This is a paradox, but is based on the nature and character of God - He is a giving God, not a taking God, so those who try to make themselves the focus will find life slipping away.

3. Severus - "I have been everything and everything is nothing. A little urn will contain all that remains of one for whom the whole world was too little."
4. This is what Ecclesiastes taught - the Teacher had earthly wisdom, pleasure, riches, position, and power - and in the end it was all meaningless!
5. Embracing the cross is right, for a self-seeking life ends in emptiness and forsakes true life.

C. The value of life and the soul

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his **soul**? Mark 8:36 (ESV)

For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his **life**? Mark 8:36 (CSB)

1. A word with many meanings - ψυχή - soul; life
For whoever would save his **life** will lose it, but whoever loses his **life** for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his **soul**? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his **soul**? Mark 8:35-37 ESV
 - a. All four words are ψυχή - a play on words here
 - b. Clearly means physical life in v35, but the meaning is shading to soul (eternal life) in vv36-37.
2. On one level, to gain the world but die physically would make the effort meaningless.
3. Again, Severus found this when he ruled the world, and then suddenly died!
4. But at a deeper and more profound level, to gain this whole world at the cost of our eternal destiny is utter folly!
5. What is worth our soul, our eternal destiny? (v37)

D. The Second Coming of Christ and Final Judgment

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:38

1. The final reason is the final judgment!
2. In this age, there are those who seize power and crush others, but they will not have the final word!
3. This world is always an adulterous and sinful generation, and disciples must choose to live for the age to come, not the present age.
4. This age and the age to come are utterly incompatible, and disciples must choose whether to live for this age, or to live for the age to come by embracing the way of the cross.
5. But this is also cause for unshakeable hope - for Jesus was not only rejected and crucified - He was raised from the dead, ascended to the Father, and will return in glory!
6. The way of the cross leads to the way of the empty tomb and eternal life and glory!

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do I see the necessity of the way of the cross?
 1. This is very unpopular and I understand why!
 2. But it is the only way for true disciples of Jesus!
 3. "The cross is laid on every Christian. ... When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

4. Those who claim to see that Jesus is the King must also embrace the way of the cross - for this is the way He walked, and it is the path He lays before us!

5. This is repellent to the world, the flesh, and the Devil, our three great enemies!

a. The world lives for this age and by its standards and craves power and ease now.

b. Our flesh wants to be Our flesh wants to be indulged not crucified!

c. Satan offers us this world as he offered it to Jesus - but we must reject him as Jesus did!

6. Am I consciously and consistently embracing the way of the cross?

B. Do I see the glory on the other side of the cross?

1. The cross is not the end - Jesus is raised!

2. We follow the whole pattern - the way of the cross but also the way of resurrection and glory!

3. "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose." (Jim Elliot)

4. Don't lose sight of the end of the story - it brings all of life into focus!

5. Christ will return! We will be raised; We will be rewarded! We will experience eternal glory!

C. The Feast of Eternity

1. Here we are reminded of the way of the Cross!

2. Here we are strengthened as we taste of the eternal feast

3. Come and be strengthened!

4. 1 Corinthians 15 confession

The Disciple's Cross

Mark 8:34-38

November 5, 2023

Communion

1 Peter 5:10

Teaching keywords: Discipleship; cross; persecution; second coming; judgment

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 1 Peter 5:10

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." Mark 8:34-38