

Matthew

16:21-28

One Liner of the Week

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. The imagery of following Jesus is one of total devotion."

Food for the Soul

S: Matthew 17:1-27

M: Matthew 18:1-20

T: Matthew 18:21-35

W: Matthew 19:1-15

T: Matthew 19:16-30

F: Matthew 20:1-16

S: Matthew 20:17-34

Discussion Guide

March 10, 2024

Sermon Synopsis

Today we delve into what it means to truly follow Jesus, exploring the depth of commitment required beyond mere cultural Christianity. As we journey through the "Called to Follow" series, we confront the challenging but rewarding path of discipleship. This week, we focus on the cost of discipleship, reflecting on the profound statement, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. The imagery of following Jesus is one of total devotion." Let's explore together what this means for our lives and how we can live out this call to total devotion to Christ.

Group Question #1

One of the major themes in Scripture are blessings that flow from being united to God through Christ. The narrative, in summary, would look like this. "You're completely destitute on your own. You're a hopeless sinner. The only thing that awaits you in the hereafter is judgement because of your crimes against God, because of your sin. The best thing that could happen for you is to be converted by the Gospel of Christ, to be saved by Him, to reap the blessings and peace that flow forth freely from that happy union." Do not misunderstand: Everything I've just written is utterly TRUE. The issue is, we cannot stop with the narrative at the point of the joy that comes with union with Christ. There is a cross that every Christian carries. A burden of suffering that belongs to all true believers. As a group, read Romans 8:12-21. *How do Paul's words jive with the health, wealth, and prosperity narrative that is so popular in America today? According to verse 17, what is the proof that we are, indeed, "fellow heirs with Christ"?*

Group Question #2

You see, the Christian life is a dual reality. We live in a physical world where real pain is an ever-present companion. We think being saved is the answer to escape "our pain". The problem is that we have wrong priorities as we look upon the cross of Jesus. We think "That Man will take my pain away, thus, making my life easier, better, happier, etc..." My friend, Christ did not come to take away your tooth ache in the here and now. He didn't come to make your wallet thicker, your house bigger, or to change the make and model of your car. That's the shallow nature of how we tend to view Jesus. Because, if we are honest, life sometimes gets HARDER for people once they have been saved. If there is one thing that is desperately needed in 2024, especially in the Western Church, it is the need to rightly understand Jesus so that we can begin to process why things aren't always "sunshine and roses" even for genuine Christians. As a group, read Isaiah 53. *Discuss what Christ really came to do.*

Group Question #3

I'll summarize Isaiah 53: Christ Jesus suffered unspeakably on behalf of His unworthy, sinful people, so as to save them. And by His stripes we, His people, are healed. So what's the big deal? That's good news for sure! But we have to take Isaiah 53 along with Romans 8 as well. Proof that Christ has healed you is to be found, among many ways, in your suffering along with Him! You see, Christ saved you from the ultimate suffering: Judgement from God for eternity. But as a saved person living in a dead and dying world, your going to have to face the music. The lost world hates Christ and, as a matter of fact, hates you too. It should come as no surprise that you will suffer in many of the same ways as Christ did if you truly follow him. We've read it before, but let's read it again together as a group: Philippians 1:27-30. *Here's the challenge, friends: Suffering with and for Christ is one of His gifts to us. How can we live into that promise faithfully? How can we be thankful in and for the suffering that comes with following Jesus? Do we believe Him? Do we trust that suffering for His names sake is, indeed, a gift to us? I pray that we would.*