

**Series: Called to Follow**  
**“The Cost of Discipleship”**

**Matthew 16:21-28**

Today we continue in our sermon series “Called to Follow” where we are learning what it means to truly follow Jesus. There are many people in our culture, especially in “Bible Belt” America, who identify themselves as followers of Christ because they have Christian principles and morals. Perhaps they grew up in a Christian home, know some Bible verses, hold to various Christian values, and maybe even attend a church regularly, but does all of this actually mean that someone is a follower of Christ? As we study the gospels, we find that even in Jesus’ day it was very easy to be in the crowd as an excited fan of what He was doing. We see repeatedly that people were very intrigued by the teachings of Jesus and impressed by His miracles and, as a result, many began to follow Jesus at least to some extent. But, as we have seen over the last several weeks, Jesus was not impressed with the crowd. He was much more interested in the hearts of the people. His concern was that they would truly believe in Him and that they devote themselves fully to following Him. So, as the crowds continued to grow, Jesus began to call them to be fully devoted, “all-in,” with Him. Like a farmer separating the good crops from the bad, Jesus’ demands were beginning to separate those who were true followers and those who were merely fans. This brings a question of examination for each of us today. Are you a fan of Jesus, or are you a devoted follower of Jesus? The question is really an examination of our commitment to Christ.

It is important to recognize that being committed to Jesus as devoted followers doesn’t mean that we are now suddenly perfect and never fail along the way. In fact, last week we saw the amazing confession of Simon Peter as he looked to Jesus and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus commended Peter and even assured him that he had been blessed by God to make this confession. It was then that Jesus explained, “Peter, you are a rock, and upon this greater Rock, I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not overcome it.” This was certainly a wonderful moment for Peter and the other disciples as they were reminded of the Lord’s plan and purpose for them. They had a unique role to play in the Gospel spreading throughout the world, and it would be through their ministry that the Lord would open the door of faith to the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles. However, even in this wonderful moment, we quickly discover that they didn’t get everything right. As soon as Jesus began to describe what was to occur next, Simon Peter began to argue with Jesus thinking that he knew a better way. This passage reminds us that even as a devoted follower of Christ, there are times that we still fall short and fail along the way. But, as a follower of Jesus, if we remain sensitive to His leading and surrendered to His will, He can use even our failures to lead us further for His glory and purposes. It was amid Peter’s failure that the Lord presented another vital aspect of discipleship – The Cost of Discipleship.

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We all understand the importance of knowing what something costs. It is unwise to pursue an action or make a purchase if you do not know the cost involved. Jesus reminds us of this in **Luke 14:28, 31** saying, “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?...Or what king, when he sets out to

meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?" Jesus' entire point is that you do not attempt to build a tower or to go into battle without first evaluating and determining the cost. Here in **Matthew 16**, Jesus is emphatically showing Peter and us that discipleship is costly. He invites all to come and follow Him, but that doesn't mean that it is easy. Discipleship is not for the faint of heart. Following Jesus is not simply for those who are looking for an exciting experience, a feel-good moment, or open acceptance from the crowd. There is a great cost to be considered when determining whether or not to follow Jesus, but I believe He shows us that the rewards far outweigh the cost. As we study the Scriptures, I want us to make three key observations about the cost of discipleship:

## **I.     The Roadblocks to Discipleship (vs. 21-23)**

All drivers understand that a roadblock is a barrier or barricade that has been set up to stop or slow traffic. Of course, most of the time roadblocks are established by workers who place them strategically and intentionally to provide safety for everyone who comes by. However, due to the human element, a host of additional influences can cause self-induced roadblocks. **\*\*ILL:** I was recently at a leadership meeting for our church plant in Fishersville when I left the late-night meeting to hit the interstate to drive home. As soon as I came to the ramp to get on the interstate, I saw the flashing lights and the orange cones that were slowing down the traffic. As I neared the end of the ramp I suddenly realized that there was a van in front of me that was completely stopped. At first, I assumed that there must be a VDOT worker preventing us from moving forward, but as the minutes passed I eventually realized that the only reason this person was stopped was because they were not finding a place to enter the traffic. As the Lord was working to help me grow in patience☺, nearly 15 minutes passed without the individual ever even hitting the gas. I don't know all that was going through that individual's mind, but it became very clear that the roadblock in front of me was not due to VDOT but due to the human hindrance of the driver in front of me. Though it was likely not the driver's intent, he had become a roadblock that hindered himself and many others from making progress on our journey. In a similar way, in this Scripture, Jesus makes some clear and specific statements about His death, but His impending suffering was not the primary roadblock to discipleship. The primary roadblock, as is usually the case, was found in the heart, mind, and will of man, in this case, Simon Peter.

Remember, at this point, the disciples have already confessed their faith in Christ. Peter has emphatically said, "Jesus, You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. You alone have the words of eternal life. Where else could we possibly go?" It is clear that the disciples believed in who Jesus was, but it is also clear that they did not fully understand all that Jesus was saying. **Verse 21** explains, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." This was not the first time that Jesus had discussed these things. In **John 2** He had already predicted that if the Jews destroyed the temple He would raise it again in three days, but they did not really understand Him. In **John 3** Jesus had told Nicodemus that just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness, He too must be lifted up so that those who would believe in Him would be saved, but again they did not fully understand. In **Matthew 12** Jesus told the Pharisees that He would spend three days and nights in the heart of the earth, but it appears that the disciples did not fully grasp that either. It is clear that the disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God to save the people, but they did not fully know how He would bring about salvation.

Jesus explains clearly that He must suffer and die to bring salvation. This was such a turning point in Jesus' communication about His crucifixion that **Mark 8:32a** explains, "And He was stating the matter plainly." In other words, there is no doubt what Jesus was saying. He has identified the city of Jerusalem where He would go through an illegal, false trial. He identified the religious leaders as the ones who would eventually lead the crowd to call for His crucifixion, which is exactly what happened when they stirred up the crowd to cry, "Crucify Him!" Jesus also clearly stated that He would be killed, and even assured them that He would rise again on the third day.

Instead of being blessed by the grace and generosity of Jesus' sacrifice, and instead of being amazed that Jesus promised that He would rise again from the grave, Peter focused only on the negative. The thought of Jesus being killed seemed preposterous to Peter, so he responded defiantly saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." On the one hand, we might understand Peter's shock. It was unthinkable that anyone would try to kill this kind, compassionate, merciful, and miracle-working man. The thought seemed ridiculous. After all, if He was indeed the Messiah, then why would the religious leaders reject Him? Didn't the Old Testament promise that the Messiah would defeat all their enemies and establish a glorious kingdom? Didn't the Old Testament declare that the Messiah would rescue His people? How would this even be possible if He was dead? There was much confusion and lack of clarity about Jesus' statement. We might also admire Peter's love for Jesus and longing to be with Him forever. Having believed in Jesus, Peter and the others have now left everything to follow Him, and they are fully believing that they will be with Him forever. Remember, Jesus had announced, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Their understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures has likely led them to believe that they would soon rule and reign with Jesus, so with everything within them they would resist any form of separation, especially separation by death. Whatever the motivation for Peter's actions, it becomes very clear that his thinking and his actions were a roadblock to what the Lord was doing. Can you imagine the thought of rebuking Jesus? It is a profound irony to call Jesus "Lord" and then at the same time rebuke Him as if we know better. It is impossible to accurately call Jesus "Lord" and at the same time correct Him. The word "Lord" means "ruler or master." If Jesus is truly the Lord of our life, we will trust Him and submit to His authority, but we will always have conflict with Him when we make anything else our lord and master. When Peter speaks against Jesus, he is adamantly declaring, "I will not have it. This cannot and will not happen. I won't let You die, Jesus." Like many today, Peter did not want to accept what went against his own hopes and ambitions.

Perhaps his actions were selfish, or perhaps his actions were simply full of compassion and love for Jesus, but regardless of his motive it is clear that his attitude and actions were completely wrong, and Jesus confronts it head-on. Envision the scene with me as Jesus has been explaining to the disciples what is to come and how He is to suffer and die. It seems that all of the disciples were upset about this, and Peter simply spoke up for the group. He pulled Jesus aside privately to rebuke Him. As soon as Peter reveals that he thinks his plans are better than God's, Jesus turns away from him and faces the disciples. **Mark 8:33** says, "But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter." What has happened in a quick moment is Jesus has literally put Simon Peter behind His back. It is then that Jesus says something startling that we must not miss, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." What a powerful and sobering statement! Why did Jesus reference Satan? Because this was the same temptation that Satan brought against Him in the wilderness in **Matthew 4**. Before Jesus even began His public

ministry, Satan tempted to Jesus to achieve glory without suffering the cross. Like he does with us, Satan was tempting Jesus to believe that there is some other way, some shortcut, something different than God's purpose and plan. Peter was a believer in Jesus, but in this moment the words of Peter were not based on the will of God but the will of the enemy. No wonder, then, that Jesus called him a stumbling block. Remember, the name that Jesus gave to him, Peter, means "rock." Just moments earlier He said, "Peter, you are a rock that I have placed in this heavenly assembly that I am building called the Church." And, now in Peter's lack of understanding and surrender, Jesus says, "Peter, you rock, are now a stumbling block to Me." **Warren Wiersbe** said it best, "Peter was thinking like a man, for most men want to escape suffering and death. He did not have God's mind in the matter. And where do we find the mind of God? In the Word of God. Until Peter was filled with the Spirit, he tended to argue with God's Word. Peter had enough faith to confess that Jesus is the Son of God, but he did not have the faith to believe that it was right for Jesus to suffer and die."

It is amazing to me how quickly Simon Peter has gone from confessing his faith in Jesus to now arguing with Jesus about God's plan, but I'm reminded that this is possible for all of us. Peter's hindrance at this moment is that his mind is set on his own interests, not on God's. He was more consumed with his will and wants than he was with the will of God. **Isaiah 55:8-9** tells us, " 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.' " God's ways and thoughts are much greater than ours, but they are revealed to us in His Word. Peter's focus at the moment was in direct opposition to Jesus' focus. Jesus knew exactly why He came from heaven to earth. In **Mark 10:45** He explained, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In **John 10:14-15** Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." Jesus came to lay down His life and explained this on many occasions, yet Peter in this moment only had his mind on the things he wanted. Can you imagine where all the world would be if Peter had gotten his way? Can you imagine where you and I would be today if Jesus hadn't died on the cross for our sins? Can you imagine how hopeless this world would be if there was no way to salvation, no way to be made a new creation, no way to be transformed by the living power of God?

Even today, our own personal interests can be a great roadblock to discipleship. We cannot submit to Jesus and do our own thing at the same time. We cannot pursue God's interests and ours at the same time unless we align our interests to Him. This demands that we must determine who and what we are living for. Are we living for self, or living for the Savior? Are we living according to our will, or according to God's? Are we running hard towards our plans, or are we seeking the Lord's? In your life are you setting your mind on God's interests, or your own?

## **II.     The Requirements of Discipleship (vs. 24)**

Having addressed Peter, Jesus is now looking at His disciples and, according to **Mark 8:34**, there were other people nearby. He invited the crowd to come over to Him where He addressed both the crowd and the disciples saying, "If anyone wishes to come after Me." This statement, "If anyone," is an open invitation to all. There were certainly plenty in the crowd who were like fair-weather fans who were close by in case something else amazing happened, but Jesus is now inviting them

beyond being a fan to being a true follower of Him. Jesus is personally inviting everyone, but the invitation came with three specific requirements:

### A. We Must Deny Ourselves

The Greek word for “deny” that Jesus used means “to turn oneself off or to disown oneself.” This denying ourselves is not the same as self-denial. We may practice some form of self-denial when we occasionally give up things for a good purpose. You may fast by giving up food for a short period of time, and this will likely have some physical benefits for you, but if it is done for the purpose of prayer it will also have many spiritual benefits. You may practice self-denial by giving up social media or TV, and this will certainly have some benefits in your life. Jesus, though, is actually calling us to something much greater. His call to deny ourselves is a call to surrender our all to Him. It is a call to surrender our lives to His Lordship and leadership. **\*\*ILL:** General William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army, and God used him greatly throughout his life. One day he was asked the secret of his amazing Christian life and Booth answered, “The key is simply this, I told the Lord that He could have all that there is of William Booth.” The wise old man was simply describing the fact that God calls us to surrender ourselves completely to the Lord, and he personally did just that. He denied himself for the purposes and glory of Jesus.

Jesus is showing us that the person who desires to become His disciple must say “no” to self and “yes” to Jesus. We are not to seek first *our* kingdom, “but seek first *His* kingdom and His righteousness,” **Matthew 6:33a**. Our pride and selfish ambitions must be done away with as we deny ourselves and yield ourselves to the Lord. When it comes to denying oneself, what greater example could there be than that of Jesus Himself? He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, King of kings and Lord of lords. He is perfect, holy, and blameless, yet He willingly laid aside His rights to humbly come down to this earth. **Philippians 2:6-8** says it clearly, “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus never ceased being God, but He did willingly lay aside His own rights and deny Himself for the glory of the Father and the good of man. We see this repeatedly in the gospels as He continually did the Father’s will and not His own. If Jesus would deny Himself in such a powerful way, then as followers of Jesus why should we do any less? As a child of God, we, too, must deny ourselves for the glory of God and the good of others. Is this true in your life today? Are you denying yourself? Is there anything that is hindering your relationship with Him? Are there any sins that you have been unwilling to confess and forsake? Are there any areas of life that you have not yet surrendered to His control?

### B. We Must Die to Self

Jesus took things a step further when He said that we must also take up our cross. We all understand what the cross represents. Even though we display it beautifully on jewelry or in paintings, the cross is ultimately a symbol of death. We place it on headstones in cemeteries, on car windows and tattoos as a visual reminder of someone who has passed away, and of course, in the church we put it in logos, graphics, and stages as a visual

reminder of what Jesus did for us. However, more than simply death, the cross was a symbol of shame, guilt, suffering, and rejection. In that day there was no more cruel way to die than to be crucified on a cross. This is why **Philippians 2:8** says that Jesus was “obedient to the point of death, EVEN death on a cross.” Paul was explaining the severity and the shock that the King of all kings came to this fallen world to be crucified on a cross. When we look at the cross in light of Christ, the cross is transformed from merely being a picture of shame and death, to now becoming a picture of love and sacrifice. **Hebrews 12:2** calls us to continually be “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” When we see the cross as a symbol of His love and sacrifice for us, it should change the way we view our own cross for Him.

Jesus is telling us in **Matthew 16** that a cross is not merely meant to be a reminder of the death of a loved one, or even a reminder of His death for us. The cross is meant to be a picture for us of our own “death.” Praise God for what Jesus did for us on the cross that He bore, but as a follower of Christ, we must also recognize that we must take up our own cross and follow Him. The context of this instruction is that it is an ongoing action. Jesus is calling us to do this daily. This does not mean that we are literally to crucify ourselves or take our own life, but it does mean that we are to daily give ourselves, laying our life down, completely to the Lord for His use and service. God pleads through Paul in **Romans 12:1**, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” In other words, in Christ, I am to lay my life down on the altar as an act of worship to Him. My life is not lived for me – my wants, my rights, my choices, etc. because my life is to be lived for Him. My focus is not on me and, frankly, it can’t be on me, if I have truly taken up my cross to follow Jesus. This is clearly what Paul had in mind in **Galatians 2:20** saying, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” This is what Jesus was calling His disciples to then, and it’s still what He’s calling us today. The disciples of Jesus are those who have trusted in Him as Lord, and who intentionally deny self and die to self, thus making every area of life open to the Lord’s plans and purposes. Our thoughts, actions, plans, goals, our very bodies – everything – surrendered to Him.

### **C. We Must Devote Ourselves**

Jesus says it plainly, “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. To devote something means “to hand over, to give oneself completely.” In devoting ourselves to Christ we are handing over the reins of our life, yielding to His rule and control. In Greek, the phrase “follow Me” is a present imperative showing where there is to be continuous action. Jesus is saying His disciples must follow Him continually. **\*\*ILL:** When we were kids on the playground we would often play “Follow the Leader.” We would say the old song, “I’m following the leader, the leader, the leader. I’m following the leader wherever he may go.” As was often the case, eventually the line would fall apart because someone else wanted to lead and didn’t get their way. In fact, I remember getting in my first fight on a playground because I wanted to be the leader and my friend Doug wouldn’t let me. ☹️ Sadly, many have the same sort of disruption in their relationship with

the Lord because they quit choosing to follow Him and would rather go their own way instead. We saw this just a few weeks ago in **John 6:66-69**, “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, ‘You do not want to go away also, do you?’ Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.’” Peter was saying emphatically, “Lord, to whom else should we go? Who else has the words of eternal life? Who else is worthy of following?”

This reality is directly opposed to the “me-first” culture that we live in today. The world tempts us to make everything about us – our wants, our pleasures, our comforts, our preferences, our rights, our whatever. To be a disciple of Jesus, we must be committed to and content in following Him. In a world that promotes “self-love,” we need to be reminded that we must love our Savior supremely and follow Him first. Much that is called “self-love” today is a form of idolatry called humanism, and it is directly opposed to the Word and ways of God. We are called as Christians to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. Remember, the first invitation Jesus gave to the disciples was, “Follow Me.” Here in **Matthew 16**, we see the exhortation repeated and are encouraged to be continuous in our lives. In other words, no matter who we are or how long we follow Jesus we never graduate past this point. We keep following Jesus all the days of our lives until the very day we stand in His presence and see Him face to face. As we keep following Jesus, we grow deeper in our knowledge of His Word, deeper in the intimacy of relationship with Him, and deeper in His likeness. **\*\*ILL:** I was recently blessed to speak with an older Christian lady who is in her 90s. I called to encourage her but found myself deeply encouraged as she described her hunger for the Word of God. She shared some things that the Lord has been showing her in the Bible that could only be true of someone who had spent their lifetime following Jesus. She told me that there are times that people have thought she was crazy because of how much she loved God’s Word but then she went on to say, “But Pastor, if they only knew the joy that I have, the things that God has shown me, the prayers that He has answered. I wish every Christian experienced these things.” Her sincere and deep devotion to Jesus greatly blessed me, but it also burdened me because she was right. Even many in the church never know that depth of relationship because we are lacking in the depth of our devotion to the Lord and His Word. Jesus invites us all to come and experience Him, but we must heed His requirements. We must deny ourselves, die to self, and devote ourselves wholeheartedly to Him.

### **III. The Rewards of Discipleship (vs. 25-27)**

Perhaps you’re sitting there thinking that this is way too great a cost. It is easy for us in our human nature to go our own direction and think that we know best. We naturally want to pursue our own plans, preferences, and pleasures, but Jesus closes His statement on discipleship with a reminder of the great cost of rejecting Him and the great reward of following Him. Though in our nature no one would want to lay down their life, the Lord gives us much to consider in these verses.

#### **A. A Word of Caution**

Jesus says, “Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it.” He is showing us that everyone who lives for themselves will inevitably doom their life for failure. If we seek fulfillment in possessions, selfish ambition, and earthly pursuits we will never find real joy or abundant and eternal life. We may find temporary satisfaction and pleasure, but it will only last for a season. We will never know what God truly intended for us if we live for ourselves instead of Him. In his book *“Made to Count,”* **Bob Record** writes that one day he sat down and thought about the most horrible thing that could ever happen to him. He concluded that the most horrible thought he could imagine was that he would one day stand before God and hear these words, “Bob, let Me show you what your life could have been like if only you had done what I asked, if only you had been faithful to Me, if only you had disciplined your life and made it really count as I intended for you.” Jesus is showing us that if we seek to save our own life, there is nothing that we can do to earn or achieve eternal life in heaven or true, abundant life on earth.

This is further stated in **verse 26**, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Jesus is clearly speaking in an exaggerated tone. No one has ever gained or can literally gain the whole world, even though countless have tried. Napoleon, Hitler, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, etc. may all try to take over the world, but no one can ever actually gain it all, yet even such a monumental task cannot save your soul or even bring fulfillment to life. We can pursue popularity, praise, power, profit, and a million other things on earth but it will all be insignificant if you stand before Jesus and He says, “Depart from Me, for I never knew you.” You can try to achieve everything the world has to offer, but in doing so you will lose your life and you will find in the end that all your attempts were in vain. Before you dismiss Jesus and His call to deny yourself, die to self, and follow Him, please heed the caution of missing your opportunity.

## **B. A Word of Celebration**

Again, Jesus says clearly, “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” It is only in losing our life for Christ’s sake that we find abundant and eternal life. When our life is laid on the altar and surrendered to Jesus, it is then that we have the joy of knowing that our life matters for eternity. This person who is “all in” with Jesus is fully surrendered to Him and enjoys the promise of abundant life here today and eternal life in heaven, and there is no one who can take this away from you. **Jim Elliott**, the great missionary to Ecuador, said it best, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” The cost of following Jesus may seem high, but it is nothing compared to the great reward. Jesus said in **Mark 8:35b**, “Whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it.” Jesus, of course, is not teaching a works-based salvation, but simply showing that the person who lives their life in devotion and surrender to Him experiences life to the fullest because Jesus is the source of abundant and eternal life.

Not only do we gain life in laying ours down, but Jesus assures us that one day He is coming again and then He will repay every man according to his deeds. Notice the phrase “every man.” Those who have lived for self and rejected Christ will be repaid according to their deeds, but those who have died to self and lived for Christ will also be repaid according to their deeds as well. **John Phillips** summarized it well, “There is a cross for the Christian



in this age, but the present age will end. In the next age will be a crown. The Lord Jesus is coming again, coming in glory, coming with the hosts of heaven, coming to reward, coming to reign. So let us take up the cross today and be rewarded one day with a crown.” What is there to gain in trusting Jesus? What is the profit for those who lay down their lives for Him? What is enjoyed by surrendering to Him? The clear answer of Jesus is this, “LIFE!” We can know the joy of abundant and eternal life, for in gaining Christ, we are assured that all the blessings of heaven are ours in Him. So, even when we face trials and sufferings here in this fallen world, we can rejoice and celebrate knowing what is in store for us. **Romans 8:18** reminds us, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Paul goes on and explains, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” **Romans 8:32.**

Friends, Jesus is putting before us two choices for how we live today: You can deny yourself, or you can live for yourself. You can take up your cross, or you can ignore the cross. You can follow Christ, or you can follow the world. You can lose your life for His sake, or you can try to save your life for your own sake. You can live for your own glory, or you can live for God’s. You can forsake the world, or you can strive to gain the world. Your soul can be saved, or it can be lost for all eternity. You can enjoy the rewards of the Lord in heaven, or you can miss His rewards and your opportunity for heaven. You can choose, but there is only one truly profitable choice. His invitation still stands. He invites anyone to come and follow Him. Won’t you do so today? Don’t let a roadblock hinder you from denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus!