

You're Invited

To Die

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Week 4

Luke 9:23-26

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*)

Harsh though it may sound, that is, in essence, what we read from the words of Jesus in Luke, chapter 9. Read Luke 9:23-27.

1. What is it about “denying yourself” that may feel right in some parts of life, but hard when it comes to following Jesus?

Do you want to follow Jesus? Maybe you're not so sure, especially after reading Jesus' words here. Maybe even those of us who have been Christians for decades are wondering if we've missed something. An invitation to something you would want to do is great, but an invitation to deny self, to take up a cross DAILY and follow Jesus? Isn't there some other way?

Here is a more desirable invitation from Jesus: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)

Doesn't that sound better? Isn't that more inviting? So, which one is the real invitation— “Come to me, and I will give you rest” or “Come to me, and I will give you death”?

Both are the real invitation. And Jesus is right up front with His invitation—Jesus promises rest, and Jesus promises death. In Jesus' time, carrying one's cross was a literal act done by those sentenced to death by crucifixion. During the Roman period it's estimated that anywhere from 300,000 to 2 million people were crucified. So, it was a metaphor people understood. And the fact that crucifixion was a brutal form of execution for slaves, rebels, and criminals would not have been lost on those who first heard Jesus' words.

Following Jesus is like marriage, even more so—rest, peace, and joy on the one hand and dying to self and losing our lives for Jesus' sake on the other. That's the way of the Gospel. That word “Gospel” means Good News. “*Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*” sounds like good news, but how is it good news that we are to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily?

The answer to that question depends on your end goal. It was Stephen Covey, in his classic book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, where he gives the second habit: “Start with the end in mind.” Isn’t that what’s reflected in Jesus’ question back in v. 25? “*What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?*” (Luke 9:25, NIV)

2. What is it that you are chasing that looks like life on the surface (in your career, relationships, family, finances, possessions, etc.)?

Here’s the bottom line: If your end goal is to gain the world, you’re not shooting high enough. If the end is to gain the world, what good is it if the world as we know it is not going to last forever? One day Jesus will return, and He will restore all things to Himself, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth, “*for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away*” (Rev. 21:1).

If we truly believe that life is eternal, that we are immortal beings, that this physical life is just a dot on the timeline of eternity, then wouldn’t we want to invest our lives in the One who can save us?

If you want the world or the things of the world, you can have them, in some form, but it’s not going to save you in the end. John wrote, *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* (1 John 2:17, ESV)

When we follow Jesus there will be crosses to bear and sufferings to endure, but these will fade away. Jesus *had the end in mind and endured the present, because He knew the end. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Hebrews 12:2, ESV)

3. What crosses have you had to bear? What sufferings are you enduring right now?

The cross you bear today will be replaced with a joy beyond measure. Whatever your hardship, whatever your burden, whatever your cross, whatever your pain, that does not have the final word. The cross gives way to the empty tomb—and so it will in your life and mine as well. Give your life to Jesus, renew your faith in Jesus, and He will give you both the strength to endure today and the hope of tomorrow.

You may feel alone, but in Jesus, you are not alone. Jesus spoke His words to the community of disciples, and so when He called them to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him, it was not a solo event. We need one another—not because we come here and sit in rows, but because we walk together through life—in those times when we come to Jesus and He gives us rest and those times when we come to Jesus and we have to die to self.

4. Who is with you in the pain of the cross?

If you feel alone and you need someone to talk to, to walk with you, to bear your sufferings with you, text “NEXT” to 317-707-6462.

Our mission as a church is *helping people take next steps with Jesus*, and that's exactly what we want to do—to be a community of cross bearers and Jesus followers—with heaven on the horizon, even though it's a bumpy road ahead.

5. Do you have the hope of heaven and eternal life? What next step is God calling you in taking up your cross (your burdens, your sufferings) to follow Jesus with this end in mind?