



“Why Lose Your Life?”

Luke 9:23-27

September 23rd, 2018

We are going to be in Luke Chapter 9 and Verses 23 through 27 again this morning. In that portion of Scripture, I think we will find some answers to the questions: Why lose your life? Why take up your cross and follow Jesus? Why deny yourself. Why live in that way? That is what we will dig into as we get into the Word together.

As I was thinking about the message this morning, I was reminded about a little shopping that Kristy and I did recently. We were in Macy’s Department Store in the Westminster Mall. We were in the clothing department and as we were walking around, I noticed all the mirrors. Then I noticed a sticker that was attached to all the mirrors throughout that department.

Finally, I looked closely at a sticker, then I thought to myself: What a fitting and sorrowful emblem of the society that we are living in. Each one of the stickers on those mirrors declared that spot a selfie station! So, those mirrors were places designated for you to take pictures of yourself.

It is not enough for you to have all those mirrors throughout the department store so that you can look at yourself, but now they designated them a safe spot where you can take out your phone and take pictures of yourself looking at yourself in the mirror! Aren’t you just so happy about that? What else do we need besides more of ourselves?

I have taken selfies and posted them. I probably will again, so I am not necessarily declaring selfies sinful! However, I am saying that this is an emblem, something that points to something deeper about the human condition—something that we have got to watch out for.

It was about twenty-three years ago that a band called DC Talk released an album that remains one of my absolute favorites. It is called *Jesus Freak* and it has so many good songs on it. One of the songs on this album is called *What Have We Become?*

Twenty-three years ago, as they were writing the lyrics of this song, they were looking around at the society that we live in and they answered the question like this: What have we become? We have become a self-indulgent people. What have we become? Where are the righteous ones, righteous in Christ—having the righteousness of God starting to manifest in their lives. What have we become in a worldly generation?

Twenty-three years ago, those men thought about the society that we are living in and asked about what have we become. We are very self-indulgent people. I wonder how they would view this today as it seems that we have gone even further into that self-absorption. Perhaps they would say that we are a self-absorbed society.

We are so focused on our own comforts, fulfillment, and needs. Yes, there is a sense of validity about that. We must take care of ourselves, but we are so self-absorbed. In our society we have reached astonishing levels of self-rule, self-interest, and self-determination.

From the Word of God, I have a message this morning for the people of God, for the followers of Christ, for the church of Jesus, and the Word we receive from our Lord today is that we are to live in a different way. There is a different pattern of life altogether that He calls us to.

In the Christian life, understand, it's not about you! It's about Christ in you!! It is about you getting over yourself and saying: Fill me with the Spirit of the Living God that the values of the Kingdom of Heaven might be displayed in me and through me, and that the glory of God might shine forth in this dark and fallen world.

It is about getting over ourselves and getting our eyes on the glory of Jesus and the needs of the people around us that we might serve them in Jesus Name. We are to be servants. We are to be servant-hearted people in the same way that Christ the King of Heaven came into this world to serve.

As we go again into the Gospel of Luke, we are going to see how Jesus laid out this kind of life, and how He laid out the calling to this kind of life with a very challenging and memorable picture of Christian living, like this one we read in Luke Chapter 9. He made no mistake that this is the absolutely essential, non-negotiable way of His Kingdom. This is how He calls each one of His people to live.

Let's look once again at Luke Chapter 9 and Verses 23 through 27

²³And he (Jesus) said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For 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. ²⁷But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

This is the Word of the Lord. This is Jesus speaking authoritatively into our lives.

There is a very important point that is revealed by studying the grammar of this text. One grammatical point that really gripped my attention was at the beginning of the paragraph that we just read. It is a detail about the opening phrase of Verse 23 where it says: And he said to all.

Reading in our English translation, we see that that is very clearly in the past tense. The New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek. In the Koine Greek language there were two different versions of the past tense.

One is called the *aorist* and one is called the *imperfect*. The aorist was a past tense referring to something that happened one time in the past. It is like a singular thing, it happened then, and it was done. The imperfect speaks of something that happened in the past over and over and over again.

Jesus said to them here: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Do you think that was the aorist tense or the imperfect tense? Just once or over and over again?

The New American Standard translation captures this grammatical detail when it says: And Jesus was saying to them. He was trying to get this point across to them. He was repeating Himself, saying it time and time again. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Daily!

Later in the Gospel of Luke we are going to have the same exact language used in another context. You can look throughout the Gospels and you will see that Jesus was constantly teaching the denial of the self for the glory of God, for the good of others.

In this comes the Kingdom shining forth through the people of God. That happens when we get over ourselves and get our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, and they live in the pattern that He has called us to live.

What I have for us this morning is Part 2 of our study of this passage of Scripture. We began it last week, but this passage is so important that I decided that we would stop and hover here for a couple weeks, so we can really take in what it has to say.

There are two questions that were asked from this text and this text provides the answers. First question: What does it mean to take up our cross and follow Jesus? The second question is: Why should we do that? Why, because that sounds tough? Each Christian is called to take up his cross—that First Century instrument of harsh capital punishment—and follow Jesus. What does that mean and why do we do it?

Last week we talked about the what: What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus. I think one of the most important things to emphasize that He is, in fact, speaking metaphorically. He gave an illustration of what the Christian life is like. I don't think this means that each Christian is to go and actively pursue their own martyrdom, although some Christians will give their lives in the pursuit of following Jesus.

But I think this is a metaphor because of the use of that word *daily*—let him take up his cross daily. If it was literal and you took up your cross and died physical every single day, how can it be a repeated experience? Jesus was talking about a way of life. It is a way of self-denial.

Last week we talked about four aspects in asking what this means. By way of quick review: What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus? Here are four marks of a cross-carrying life:

- 1. It's a life of discipleship:** We have our eyes on Jesus. Our eyes are fixed on Him. We look to Him as our Lord and our Master and our Teacher, and we walk in His ways. It is a life of discipleship.
- 2. It's a life of self-denial:** It recognizes that in our fallenness every single one of us has the propensity to live a life that is centered on itself. What about my desires? What about my feelings? What about my longing and comfort? What about me? And Jesus said to crucify yourself. Live for God and others. That involves some self-denial. It says this right here in the text when it says to deny yourself.
- 3. It's a life of daily devotions:** We live this way 24/7, four weeks a month, twelve months a year—all our lives. We live this way at work and at play, on the job and in the home, with believers and with unbelievers. Morning, noon, and night. Walling with Jesus is a daily pattern of devotion
- 4. It's a life of sacrificial pain:** Once again, I understand that this is a metaphor for the Christian life, but, in the end, we can't get around the fact that the cross was not a pleasant experience. What happened on First Century Roman crosses? Death and pain happened there.

If you are looking for a life that will make is so that you bypass the experience of pain and sorrow and difficulty and heaviness, the Christian life is not it because there is pain in the offering. However, when we are connected to God in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, there is going to be a lot of joy that is mixed in with that pain.

But there is pain involved with Christian living. It is a life of self-sacrifice, especially when society increasingly turns against Christ and His Word and the Christian steps up and says: No, I'm a follower of Jesus. There is a price tag that is associated with that. There can be pain involved.

When we are connected to our Messiah, see and hear His call, the strangest thing happens, and we say: I want that. Jesus came to provide life for me and I want to walk with Him in that pattern. This is supernatural for the one who is tuned in to the things of the Lord. It is an awesome thing.

I remember about twenty years ago when I was out on the church patio after an early evening event. I was involved in a conversation with two other men, one was a visitor to the church and the other was our faithful pastor Paul Dirks, who is now in the presence of Jesus. This visitor was getting acquainted with Pastor Paul and he asked him how long he has been in Christian ministry. Pastor Paul answered something like: I have been in

ministry serving the Lord for about forty or fifty years going all the way back to his service at the Church of the Open Door under the good Doctor J. Vernon McGee.

The visitor was amazed to hear about all those years Pastor Paul had served the Lord, but this is what I remember specifically about that conversation: Almost in passing, Pastor Paul said, *Yes, and I've got the scars to prove it.* I was a young seminarian at the time and thought wow, because here was a man who had been serving the Messiah faithfully and had just testified that there are some hard aspects to Christian living.

That's not just true of the ministry, because the thorns of the curse in this world afflict everything. So, there will be some scars. They come with it. Count the cost, says Jesus. There is the *what* of it. These all come to us from Verse 23.

What is it to take up your cross and follow Christ? It is discipleship, self-denial, daily devotions, and it is sacrificial pain. Why? Why should we live this way? That is the next question. Why do we follow Christ in this life?

As we continue in this paragraph of Scripture, I think we have the answers laid out for us. Now we look at Verses 24 through 27. Scan your eyes over these verses and I want you to notice the repeated use of a small, significant three letter word. It is the word *for*. This is the first word found in Verses 24, 25, and 26.

Jesus said:

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

Why? Jesus gives us three reasons why. As we continue in this paragraph, we see the use of that word *for* and it helps us to understand that Jesus used a form of speech called *persuasion*. He gave us the rationale, the reasoning as to why you live this way.

Let's spend some time recognizing what Jesus said here. Jesus was adamant that this is how we are to live following Him. Three reasons why. One, it saves your life. Second, it profits your soul and third, it honors your Savior.

Why live a cross-bearing life?

1. It Saves Your Life!

We see this as Jesus laid it out for us. Let's read Verse 23 because everything else flows out of this verse.

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

Why?

²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

There is a paradox of Christian living. You lose what you try to hold on to, and you preserve what you are willing to let go of. You need to lose your life in order to save your life, according to what Jesus clearly stated here.

I was reading through this language of this Scripture and the language of loss is very, very potent in the original Greek that underlies the English. The word for *loss* or *losing* in this verse is the Greek verb *apollumi*, and it has the nuance of ruin and destruction.

Some of you who have studied the book of Revelation might be reminded that there is a notorious and dark being that is called Apollyon. Some people think that that is Satan himself, but it is more likely a high-ranking demonic power. Apollyon, the one who is bent on destruction.

That is the nuance of what is here in this text. If you want to save your own life, so focused on your own needs and desires and yearnings and longings, you are going to end up destroying your life by living a self-centered life. You will lose your life in the grand scheme of things.

However, if you give up the self-serving life and live the servant life, destroying your selfish desires, and live for the glory of the King, then you end up saving your life. Then you grow in to all that the Lord created you to be. This is the channel through which God blesses.

I started reading this, with all the language of tearing down, ruin and destruction, and I began to think about the Lord Jesus Christ as an estate developer. He comes to you and He purchases your property, and, guess what people, He does not plan to remodel the old house that was sitting on that property, so that you get to keep all the old furnishing—all the things that was so focused on you, you, you.

Instead Jesus is determined to come in and tear that house down and build something wonderful and glorious and gracious and God-centered in its place. Do you remember that wonderful verse about the Christian life in II Corinthians 5:17?

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Guess what? The new is not going to come until the old has gone. That is why it says in Scripture that our lives were buried with Him in baptism, and now we are raised up in newness of life in Christ. But if you want to hold on to that same old me, me, me, me life, then that is a denial of walking with Christ who intends to cause other priorities to rise up within you.

This comes out to us in this command of Jesus:

²³And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

You get your eyes on Jesus. You deny the baser inclinations of the selfish nature, and you follow Jesus. What you are going to find is that you have life and that you have life indeed, you have life that extends into eternity with Him. It is then that you truly find your life.

I think this is something of what Jesus means when He said that whoever would save his life is going to lose it, but whoever will lose his life for His sake is going to find it. Why live a cross-bearing life? It saves your life.

We continue, and we see another reason why:

2. It Profits Your soul!

In the grand eternal scheme of things, you find true life and gain. It is good for body, soul, and spirit. By God’s grace working in your life, you then have a place in His everlasting Kingdom where there will be eternal pleasures at His right hand. Living a cross-bearing life profits you. It is good for you.

This contrast to the person that is depicted for us is given in Verse 25. Again, Verse 23:

²³And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Why?

²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Here, Jesus was using language from the business world. This is talk about profit and loss, about things gained and about things forfeited. It is kind of like a business contract. The question is: Where is the profit and where is the loss? That is the language that is used here in this portion of Scripture.

There is a question mark at the end of Verse 25, so Jesus is asking a very calculating question, trying to get to us to think about these things. This is amazing because He pictures for us a man who gains the whole world! Just think about that, he gains the whole world for his own use and enjoyment. It is all there for him.

Just think about that. He comes to own every single piece of real estate on every coastline and in every attractive geographical region on the earth. He comes in to

possession of every national park and every luxurious lodge in all those parks. This man takes possession of every single gourmet kitchen, along with its chef staff to make sure that everything is cooked properly.

I began thinking about this and I thought that this man gains possession every single beach that is good for surfing! Lower Trestles is his all to himself. He gains the Banzai Pipeline, and the whole north shore while we are at it, along with that dreamy wave called Cloud Break in Fiji where waves are so beautiful but are now infested with so many surfers!

He gets every Best Buy gadget he wants. He gets it all and gets it all for himself. It is kind of like Solomon in the Old Testament. There was nothing that his eyes desired that he needed to deny himself of. He got it all, following his own selfish pursuits.

That is on one side of the contract. Then we see what is on the other side. Gasp! In order to follow after all those self-interest things, what does he give up? He has to give up himself.

This question leaves us with a cliff hanger. How long does he get to enjoy all those things? Does he give up his life immediately, or does he get a year to enjoy it; maybe fifty years to enjoy it? What happens?

In the end, what does it matter? Let's say that this person gets to enjoy all those things for five decades. Do you know how fleeting those five decades are in view of eternity; knowing God or not knowing God; Heaven or hell? What is the point of five decades of living a self-centered life when after that comes the judgment?

Do you want to know what your life is according to James Chapter 4 and Verse 14? It is a mist. It is a vapor. It is there for a little bit and then it is gone. Here is life on this earth: (Pastor picks up air freshener and sprays a mist). There it is. Enjoy it! Where did it go? Somebody might say: Well, I might live a long life. (Pastor sprays a long spray of air freshener.) There it goes!

Jesus said that you can gain the whole world in your self-interested pursuits. But here is the call of the Lordship of Christ upon every single life that is called in to His grace: You can deny Christ and live as lord of your own life, or you can deny yourself and walk with Christ who is the Lord of your life.

When you walk with Christ, He is going to lead you forth in a life where you deny yourself and you say: Lord, I want to get over myself. I want to see the glory of Your grace and truth and Kingdom flowing forth through me.

So, what the call is going to require is that we take up our cross daily and deny the self-centered nature of our sinful fallen flesh and that we get our eyes on Jesus and that we follow Him and walk in His way.

This profits our soul. This profits everything about us when it comes to us being resurrected beings that have the Spirit of God filling us up. In the end, it profits us in every way when we follow Jesus.

Finally, living a cross-carrying life:

3. It Honors Your Savior!

Why live a cross-bearing life? Because it shows that you have come to a place where you see Christ as your greatest treasure, where you say: What dominates my sight is not about what I give up, it is about what I get. I get to walk with the Risen Savior who died on the cross for my sin. I get to learn to love like Jesus loved. I get to learn to give myself away like Jesus gave Himself away, and in that find the fullness of life.

Living a cross-bearing life honors our Savior. When we say that we are going to deny ourselves and walk in the ways of Jesus, it shows that we have come to understand Jesus as that which is supremely valuable, even above the things of this world. It honors Jesus when we hear this call and we follow Him.

Once again, the contrast is here before us. All this is set in contrast to the one who denies Jesus and says no thanks I am living as lord of my own life. We see this pictured for us when we go into Verse 26. Starting with Verse 23:

²³And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Why?

²⁶For 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 angles.

Here in this verse Jesus was speaking to us in the prophetic sense. He was looking at things that are to take place here on the planet earth. I think there two elements of this prophetic picture that Jesus gave, although one of those pictures is clearer and easier seen than the other. However, there are two phases to this.

The first element of this prophesy is that Jesus looks to a time here on this earth, an entire era, where the people of this world will cast shame on Him and His truth. They will stand in moral judgment of those who follow Jesus as Lord and Savior who believes in and stands on His truths.

The world will hear the teaching of Jesus and say it is not good. They will question the fact that there is just one way to God, and that way is through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and all the other religions of the world are false. They will say shame on Christians and that they should not think like that.

There will be people in this world who will look at the Biblical picture of the family and sexual ethics and see what God has designed—that there is safety in God’s plan for one man and one woman to come together in intimacy under the bond of marriage. That’s it, folks! That’s it.

However, people will say in response to this: That is ridiculous that you would believe such a thing. What a shallow and limited way of thinking. There is so much love in the world. However, we can’t keep from seeing the ruin that is taking place in society resulting from people going outside of sex within the union of marriage. It is everywhere, but their eyes don’t see it and they will cast shame upon those who stand on this principle.

There would be some would be disciple who is somewhat interested in what they are hearing about Jesus, but then they discern what it is going to cost them, so in the end they reject following Jesus, and say they don’t believe in that. That is the first aspect of this prophecy that there will be some who, in the end, are ashamed of Christ.

The second part of this prophecy is when Jesus Christ comes back into this world in power and in glory. He will return not as the gentle Sacrificial Lamb but as the Roaring Lion displaying His righteousness and His truth.

When that time comes, if there is a person who said no to Jesus because they were ashamed of His plan of salvation and His teaching, Jesus said that the Son of Man will be ashamed of him. That is a very strong statement. It comes straight from the lips of Jesus, so we just need to hear it, receive it, and to let it drop.

Some of us might be like Peter but let not any of us be like Judas. Peter struggled. A little servant girl asked him if he wasn’t a follower of Jesus, and Peter said that he was not! Then he cursed—I don’t know Him! But his heart was broken, and he came around. But something in the heart of Judas was foul and he denied His Messiah.

In a society that would even cast shame upon the plan of salvation and the Word of Jesus Christ, we need to be those who will take up our crosses and say: I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus. He died on an old rugged cross for my sin. He rose with glory and power from the grave. He is the One who has given me His Spirit. He is the One who loved with a love that cannot be measured. I walk with Jesus, so say what you want!

When you take up your cross and deny the tendency that will want to shrink back in a society that opposes the faith, and stand up for Jesus, then Jesus is going to come back and is going to say, “well done, good and faithful servant.” Living a cross-carrying life honors the Lord.

That is something for us to take heart. If there is ever a tendency in you where you are tempted to shrink back and be ashamed, perhaps these words will bring some encouragement to your heart. According to Dr. Bruce Hart in his great, great website

called preceptaustin.org, where he gathers different Bible study notes and illustrations, he spoke of these words that were found in the possession of a young African man who was martyred for his faith in Zimbabwe.

His words are as follows:

"I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed, I have the Holy Spirit power, the die has been cast, I have stepped over the line, the decision has been made: I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back off, or be still.

"My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

"I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I do not have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labor with power.

"My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I won't... give up, shut up, let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ.

"I must... go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till everyone knows, work till He stops me, and when He comes for His own, He will have no trouble recognizing me because my banner will have been clear."

Whoa! I read that and talk about shame. That puts me to shame, but, Lord, there is a beauty to that. I read that and feel like it is glorious.

Perhaps that is a picture of what Jesus had in mind when He said: If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. This is the shining light of the life that is lived out for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will finish with one more verse as we weigh these things up and pray that the Lord would cause first the desire to swell up in our hearts and then, by the power of the Spirit, the obedience to trail after the desire. Sometimes the obedience comes first and then the desire comes with it.

Let's see about that word of encouragement that Jesus gives at the end of the passage of Scripture. Verse 27:

²⁷But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.

Jesus was talking to this big group of disciples, with the twelve and many more. Then whoever He could have gathered in to hear He said: There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.

That is a picture of the ultimate power that we are going to be a part of as we follow Jesus. Some people read that and get a little bit perplexed. They want to know what that means. Is that a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus because in the preceding verse, He was talking about His coming. He would return to this earth in glory.

Now He said that *some of them* standing there would not taste death until they see the kingdom of God. Does that mean that it was a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? The Second Coming did not come in their lifetime. They tasted death, so was Jesus wrong, they ask?

Brothers and sisters, taking a closer look I think it becomes clear that that is not a statement about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That is not talking about what He just said in Verse 26 but is looking forward to what we will be studying next week

Jesus' words were:

***27* But I tell you truly, there are *some* standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."**

There are two key words here: Some and until. Some of those people would see the Kingdom of God, not all of them. If He was talking about the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ, I can guarantee you that all of them would see it.

Verse 27 says that they will not taste death *until* they see the Kingdom, so if it was referring to the Second Coming of Jesus, these followers of Christ were not going to taste death afterwards. Coming to Christ, they were going to be robed in their everlasting resurrection bodies, changed in the twinkling of an eye. So, they would not taste death.

As a result, this is not talking about the Second Coming of Jesus, because it would only be some who saw it. Then they would taste death afterwards. This makes sense to me. It satisfies me.

When we get into next week's passage, we are going to see something so awesome, because Jesus is going to take three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, up on a high mountain side. Right there in their presence, His countenance is going to change. He will be transfigured in the Biblical language, so that His inherent divine glory is going to shine all over them.

Then suddenly they will see two saints who had long since physically died. Elijah and Moses will be right in the midst of that gleaming Light having a conversation with the Messiah. Then the Shakina glory cloud that appears all throughout the Old Testament will envelope that mountain top as they hear a voice commanding from the cloud, "This is my Son whom I love. Listen to Him."

That sounds like a very spectacular glimpse of the glory of the Kingdom of God. It is there preserved for us in Scripture, something that happened on this earth. Reflecting on it in one of his epistles, Peter said: We are not talking about myth or cleverly invented stories. We saw His glory on that mountainside. Peter came as a First Century witness, testifying about the awesome glory of the Kingdom of God.

Hearing a call like this gives us a picture of the boarder perspective that life in Christ is everlasting and His Kingdom is glorious. This is the Kingdom that we are to live for. We are to ask God to shine through us that we might be humble servants of the Lord Most High; that grace and truth might be embodied in us; that when people see us they see Christ in us.

They will see people who have gotten over themselves and that are hooked on the Messiah and wants to make Him known. That is the life that Christ calls every Christian to. May the Holy Spirit put a yearning desire in our hearts to walk this way.

With that, I am going to close in a word of prayer.