**EYES ON JESUS**

**Our Cross**

Last week Jesus brought His disciples up to Caesarea Philippi and asked them the question “Who do you say I am” .

Peter piped up first with the right answer; “You are the Messiah, the son of God!”

Jesus was delighted. No one had been revealed that truth yet, and Jesus was celebrating that Peter received it as a Divine Download directly from God. It was happening just as Jesus had hoped, these disciples were hearing from God themselves. This was vitally important, because it is how they would need to operate once Jesus left them and ascended to heaven.

At that point however, he decided to reveal the deeper plan of what He was about to do; he told them about the suffering He would endure, the Cross and the Resurrection.

**Matt 16:21** - ***Jesus Predicts His Death***

**21** “From then on Jesusbegan to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.**”**

This was shocking to the apostles, particularly Peter .The thought of their King Messiah being killed did not fit into their vision and hope for Jesus.

**Mark 8:22-23**

**22**Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” **23**Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

This is the first of the three times that Jesus mentions His death. He never mentions the word Cross of Crucifixion until the third time in Matthew.

The apostles likely knew however the type of death he would suffer in Jerusalem under Roman occupation. Public, excruciating, painful, humiliating death on the CROSS. They had likely witnessed it many times and the sight of someone being crucified was probably burned into their minds at a young age. The cross was likely the most awful thing that they could ever think of, and so the next thing Jesus says to them probably stunned them even more than anything he had said so far.

**Mark 8:34-38 “**Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

**35**For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

**36**What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? **37**Or what can anyone give in exchange for their 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 them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

This whole statement at the close of Mark 8 is Jesus’ defining “Discipleship Statement”.

His use of the word *cross* probably shocked them. The thought of proverbially carrying a cross and following someone who just said that they are going to Jerusalem to die was probably very alarming and disconcerting.

But the consequences of not following Him, and *the rewards* of truly following Him were presented to them very clearly.

*Matthew’s version* uses the same language about denying yourself and taking up your cross, but he talks about the *rewards* of giving your life to God.

**Matt 16:24-27**

**24**Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **25**For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. **26**What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **27**For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will “reward” each person according to what they have done.

[STORY FROM LAST YEAR: 13 yr. old boy named “Macabuhay” (Mack-a-boo-hay)

Who was a parking lot worker in Malaysia. He was from a Poor family being raised by a Mom who had some type of sickness that kept her from finding a job. They could not afford school because schools are expensive in Malaysia and the children usually had to find work so the family could eat.

Macabuhay found a wallet in the parking lot with ($135) in it. He chose to turn it in as opposed to keep it. He felt in his heart that he should do the right thing.

The people of Malaysia heard about this and got together and rewarded him by crowd-funding a scholarship that can sustain him from elementary school to college years and for his mom to open a small store to support their family. As a result of giving away the wallet in an act of goodness and honesty, his whole life and future was transformed as was the life of his family. ]

Why does this story make us feel so good? Because it is good.

It shows the same principle that Jesus was presenting to His disciples.

If you cling to what you’ve gotten on your own, you will forfeit a blessing and never receive the reward for what God has for you, which is always so much greater.

Let’s look at ALL FOUR parts of this “Discipleship Statement” from Jesus and see how we call follow him in all these areas:

1. **Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**
2. **For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.**
3. **What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?**
4. **If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”**

Let’s look at each one of these;

1. **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

Christianity is sometimes presented as a feel-good, self-help philosophy that allows you to freely do whatever you want and be whatever you want to be.

That couldn’t be farther from the truth. Yes there is joy, peace, freedom and a sense of purpose that comes from living your life for Jesus, but that only comes when you submit your desires and aspirations to him and put to death the things of the flesh (thus the cross).

We need to have the same attitude in us that was also in Jesus;

**Phil. 2:5-11**

**5**You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

**6**Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God
    as something to cling to.
**7**Instead, he gave up his divine privilegeshe took the humble position of a slave[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A5-11&version=NLT#fen-NLT-29359c)]
    and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A5-11&version=NLT#fen-NLT-29359d)]
**8**    he humbled himself in obedience to God

 and died a criminal’s death on a cross.

**9**Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
    and gave him the name above all other names,
**10**that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
    in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
**11**and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
    to the glory of God the Father.

Remember Jesus was the one who said *“not MY will, but YOURS be done”*

1. **For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.**

There is no greater purpose for your life than pouring yourself into the ministry and calling that God has given you. If you budget your time to priorities around your own interests and selfish pursuits, you will lose your life. You will lose the life that God wants to shine in you and your family and will reap the consequences that come from missed opportunity and possibly bad seed. Those in your life will not be impacted by the gospel and miss out on the life that God has for them, and you and your family will see the thorns of selfishness grow where you’d hoped the fruit of godliness would spring forth.

1. **What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?**

So much time and effort is given to “gaining the whole world”. Working hard in the pursuit of money to try to gain a life of comfort and security, even at the expense of time with the Lord, devotion to His work and moments of with the people God has placed in our lives. Jesus tells us plainly “It’s not worth it!”

God wants to bless us financially, but He wants it to come as provision from His hand, not our own self-sufficiently.

He wants us to be *generous and trusting* with our money, not *selfish and stingy*, because He wants to reward us just like Macabuhay was rewarded. That’s why Tithing is so important. When we tithe, we are saying “God, I trust you with my finances. May your will be done.”

This is why Myself and many of you give 10% (tithe) of our earnings to the Lord’s storehouse as is directed in Malachi 3. I’ve seen in my life and heard many stories from you, that when we do that, God miraculously supplies over and above for our needs (not *just* financial, although that’s included)

I can fully testify, as can many of you, that this scripture is true.

**Mal 3:10 “**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

I wished more people tithed, so they could experience the blessing that this scripture promises by being obedient to His Word.

1. **If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”**

Jesus asks us to take a stand for him. Part of being a believer, is declaring our faith in Him.

Remember what he told the Roman Christians;

**Rom 10:9** “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

These believers took their life in their hands by obeying this verse.

Those that were baptized made a public statement “declaring their allegiance to Jesus the Lord”, on a public beach showing that they are NOT ASHAMED of Jesus.

There is no other way to follow the Lord than to deny yourself take up your cross and surrender to His *Lordship*.

CROSS = DEATH

Sometimes that means crucifying; your pride, your ego, your selfish ambitions and your reputation.

Are we *willing* to take up our cross?:

• Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing some of your closest friends?
• Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means alienation from your family?
• Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your job?
• Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing your life?

It doesn’t always mean that will lose all these things, but we have to *be willing.*

I will tell you from experience, that if you do take up your cross and follow Him fully, it will be the greatest decision you could ever make. You will experience His Love, Power, Peace, hope and sense of Purpose that you will not find any *other way*. The *other way* leaves you empty and unfulfilled.

Remember, “He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

**Matt 16:27“**For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will “reward” each person according to what they have done”

*Prayer of Saint Francis:*

*“For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;*

 *it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.”*

**My prayer for you is that you receive the full reward,**

 **of a life that is fully surrendered.**