

He Said What Part 5

Take Up Your Cross Daily

Luke 9:23-27

Memory Verses: Luke 9:23-24

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Last week I told yall the story about when I called my mom a witch and her elastagirl arms came into the back seat and smacked me so hard I can still feel it. Well, that wasn't the only time me and my momma got into it when I was a kid. One time we were yelling at each other. I was trying to make my case as to why I was right. She was telling me her case as to why I was wrong. And she said the most confusing statement I'd ever heard her say. She said, "shut your mouth when you're talking to me." And there in the middle of the fight I stopped, thought about it and began to chuckle. And I said what I shouldn't have said; I said, "well do you want me to shut my mouth or keep talking?" It was a fair question. I don't know how to shut my mouth when I'm talking to anyone. In fact, it is rather difficult to talk when your mouth is shut. I'm not a ventriloquist. But I knew what she meant and because I refused to shut my mouth when talking to my mom... I think I got grounded. Thus is life.

Let's be honest. "shut your mouth when your talking to me" is a very confusing statement to be sure, but I could have easily been one of Jesus' statements. You see, Jesus said stuff that made no sense all the time... like; "hate your mother and father, I came to call sinners, and I came to bring the sword and divide. Or what about what he said last week when he asked, "who is my mother" when his mother was standing right next to him. Jesus... are you okay?

And what about the statement we will look at today; "take up your cross daily." Take up your cross daily! (He said what?) Listen, that's confusing... for a couple of reasons. One, why would anyone take up their cross. The cross is an instrument of torture and death. It would be like me asking you to take up the electric chair or lethally inject yourself everyday. That's odd. Also, how can you do it everyday? Once is enough. Once you are on that cross, you aren't coming down. Once you've been electrocuted in the electric chair or hung from the hangman's noose, you are dead! So you can't just get back up and do it again the next day, right? Dead people don't get to die and then rise back up to do it again. And even if they could, why would you want to? What are you going to do today? Well, I was thinking about doing the same thing I do everyday... I'm going to take a few to the chest from the firing squad. What? That's ludicrous. For Jesus to say this statement to the people of his time they must have been looking around at each other wondering if

Jesus was off his meds or not. It simply didn't make any sense. And yet, Jesus wasn't crazy, he meant every word that he said, and if you understand what he's trying to say, it makes perfect sense. Let's look at the context in **Luke 9:23-27**.

In order to understand this statement this morning the first thing you need to realize is that **Jesus isn't talking about the death of the physical body**. He's talking about the death of our worldly, fleshly, sin saturated mindset. He's talking about the spiritual death of the old man so that the **Holy Spirit can find residence in our souls**. We cannot follow Jesus if we are **still slaves to sin and this world**. We must divorce ourselves from this world. **We must cut it out like cancer and commit to dying to it everyday so that daily we are renewed to live our lives in submission to Christ**. This is what **he's talking about**. The question today is this; are you willing to die? Are you willing to die to your self, die to the flesh, and die to the pleasures, promises, and possessions of this dark and dying world? And are you willing to do it every single day of your life? Take up your cross daily and follow Jesus! The main point this morning is simple; **you can either embrace this world and lose your soul or you can embrace the cross and only lose the trivial**.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want us to see this morning is... **Taking Up Your Cross Means Denying Yourself For The Sake of Submitting To Christ**. Look at the parallel passage in **Matthew 16:24-26**. Dying to yourself means denying yourself. If we want to follow Christ there are things in our lives that we easily could indulge in but must deny, and in order to understand our worldly mindsets we need to recognize that each of us only has a specific capacity of things we can manage in our lives. There are two factors to consider. Factor 1; we each only have 16 hours everyday to work with if we account for 8 hours of sleep each night. Some of us need more rest and relaxation than others, and some of us work more than others. Some could probably relax for all 16 hours and some could probably work for all 16 hours. No one would consider either of those healthy. Factor 2: We all like different things. Some of us work jobs that are very meaningful and bring glory to God. Some of us find less meaningful ways of supporting our lifestyles. Some of us like to use our free time to indulge in sinful activities and some of us use our free time to indulge in mind numbing entertainment. While a small minority use their free time for ministry and for growing the kingdom of God.

So how are you filling your 16 hours? Are those 16 hours for Christ or are those 16 hours for you. If you took inventory of everything you did yesterday and categorized it for Christ or for you which category would have more in it? I dare say for each and everyone of us the category for ourselves would be way fuller. This is what we have to change. And its not

just about what we do, its about how we think. I'm not saying that if you do more religious things then you are following Christ. You can do many religious things that bring no glory at all to God. On the contrary, you can do all kinds of secular things for the glory of Christ. **1 Corinthians 10:31** tells us that whatever we do we can do it for the glory of God. If you work a secular job, you can do it for the glory of God by taking every opportunity to share his love and serve others. Hopefully at some point you'll even be able to have spiritual conversations that lead to discipleship. If you like secular movies, you can discuss spiritual themes in them and how they either draw us to Christ or warn us of sinfulness. If you like hiking, spend that hike praying and thanking God for his wonderful creation. But enjoying what God has given us isn't enough. If you truly desire to follow Christ you will be willing to deny yourself some of life's pleasures, and some of the 16 hours you have, to serve the needy, share the gospel, minister to the church, and so forth. No one can tell you if you are denying yourself or not... only you can truly know that. So what do you think? In your life are you denying the world for the sake of Christ or not? If not, what step can you take today to deny the world more. What possession, hobby, or passion can you give up for the sake of Christ this year? **One of C.S. Lewis' most famous quotes says this; "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."**The point is simple... **The more worldly things you give up the more meaningful passions Christ will fill you with. You can either embrace this world and lose your soul or you can embrace the cross and only lose the trivial.**

The second thing I want us to see is... **Taking Up Your Cross Will Cost You This World And It's Trivialities**. The cross of Christ is a beautiful thing because it is where Christ died for us. Our cross is also a beautiful thing because it is where we die to ourselves for the sake of Jesus. Let's look at another parallel passage to our main scripture; **Mark 8:34-37**. The cross is beautiful because that is where we find our true life. That is where our eternal journey with Christ begins. But the beauty of the cross costs us something very dear to us; the world. When I say "the world" what I'm talking about is all of the pursuits and pleasures of this world that you can in no way glorify God through. And trust me, there is a lot of "the world" in this world. Selfish desires; the world. Sexual impurities; the world. Deceitful schemes; the world. Faithless living; the world. Indulgence; the world. And we love all of it. In fact we love it so much it keeps us from loving Christ. It is for these reasons many have forsaken church this morning. It is for these reasons many have

neglected to pray to God in many days, weeks or years. It is for these reasons that many say they love God but truly have no relationship with him at all. But if we are to follow Christ we must allow the holy spirit to remove these from our soul and we must resolutely determine to forsake them for the sake of our Lord and Savior. And let's be honest. **Though we long for them, all of these worldly things are mostly trivial things that we don't need and can easily afford to let go of. You can either embrace this world and lose your soul or you can embrace the cross and only lose the trivial.**

The last thing we need to see today is that... **Taking Up Your Cross Will Prove Your Allegiance To God and Men**. There's one more aspect at work here in this passage. In **Luke 9:26-27** Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that if we are ashamed of him on this earth he will be ashamed of us before God in heaven. **Mark 8:38** reiterates this. Jesus is making it clear here. **If you chose not to take up your cross and follow him daily then you are making the statement that you don't truly acknowledge Jesus as your Lord**. On the contrary, if you do take up your cross daily then you have proven that you are truly a follower of Christ; not just to Christ but to everyone who observes your life. In essence, denying this world is the greatest evidence to those around you that you are truly one of Jesus' disciples and that what you believe is real. **Luke 12:8-12** finishes this thought. If you deny Christ and ask for forgiveness you will be forgiven. But if you deny Christ with your life and never repent then you will not be forgiven and will spend enter in hell. Also, you don't need to fret about how this plays out in the real world. If you deny yourself and follow Christ he will help you say the right things at the right times and he will help you do the right things at the right times. **A denied life is a life that depends on Christ to live.**

Application

The application this morning is simple. Have you taken up your cross? Have you denied this world and the pleasures of this world for the sake of following Jesus? Do you depend on his strength to deny this world every single day? If not, today is the day to get that right. What is it that you need to deny yourself today. Just think of one think that God is calling you to give up for his glory and simply lay it down at the altar today. Take one small step from the world and towards Christ. What is he calling you to do

Conclusion

For the last three year God has blessed us at Stone Creek Church because we have chosen to take up our cross and follow him. I thought it would be fun to close our service thinking about how exactly we have carried our cross for Jesus. In the last three years we have seen 10 people

baptized. We've seen 13 people join as covenant partners. We've added 2 staff members. We've ministered to an estimated 2000 people through our Easter Egg Hunt and Trunk or Treat outreaches. We've fed an estimated 300 people through our Thanksgiving meals and benevolence ministry. We've fulfilled over 30 care portal requests and given an estimated \$10,000 worth of items to families in need. We've trained 10 people in disaster relief and have gone on three disaster relief mission trips. We've prayed for over 300 neighbors an estimated 10 times each through Bless Every Home. We've preached and participated in over 160 different worship services with 10 different speakers and 70 different volunteers staffing the praise team, the tech team, the SC kids team, the SC Students team, the First Impressions team, and the hospitality team. We've each committed to reaching one person with the Gospel the last three years and are seeing fruit through our efforts. And we've given an estimated \$70,000 dollars to missions both foreign and local. For the last three year, thank you so much for carrying the cross of Christ here at stone Creek, and pray you would continue to do so and even more so. Amen.