

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

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The Words, Works, and Person of Christ

The Gospel of Luke

The Free Gift that Costs Everything (Pt 2)

September 25, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 9:23-27

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:1-7

Luk 9:23-27 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (24) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (25) For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? (26) For 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. (27) But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

J.C. Ryle, in his book *Holiness*, writes this:

"Which of you, intending to build a house, sitteth not down first and couneth the cost?"--Luke xiv. 28.

THE text is one of great importance. Few are the people who are not often obliged to ask themselves--"What does it cost?" In buying property, in building houses, in furnishing rooms, in forming plans, in changing dwellings, in educating children, it is wise and prudent to look forward and consider. Many would save themselves much sorrow and trouble if they would only

remember the question--"What does it cost?"

But there is one subject on which it is especially important to "count the cost." That subject is the salvation of our souls. What does it cost to be a true Christian? What does it cost to be a really holy person? This, after all, is the grand question. For lack of thought about this, thousands, after seeming to begin well, turn away from the road to heaven, and are lost forever in hell. Let me try to say a few words which may throw light on the subject.

We are living in strange times. Events are hurrying on with singular rapidity. We never know "what a day may bring forth"; how much less do we know what may happen in a year!--We live in a day of great religious profession. Scores of professing Christians in every part of the land are expressing a desire for more holiness and a higher degree of spiritual life. Yet nothing is more common than to see people receiving the Word with joy, and then after two or three years falling

GOSPEL OF LUKE 9:23-27

away, and going back to their sins. They had not considered "what it costs" to be a really consistent believer and holy Christian.

Surely these are times when we ought often to sit down and "count the cost," and to consider the state of our souls. We must focus upon what we are all about. If we desire to be truly holy, it is a good sign. We may thank God for putting the desire into our hearts. But still the cost ought to be counted. No doubt Christ's way to eternal life is a way of pleasantness. But it is folly to shut our eyes to the fact that His way is narrow, and the cross comes before the crown.

Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots (p. 91-92). Kindle Edition.

The cross comes before the crown. And that addresses our text this morning-

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

Whenever we study our Bibles, one of the first things we need to do is *slow down. Look. Observe. Ask some questions:*

- The text here in verse 23 begins with the little word, “if.” If anyone.
- What does it mean to “come after” Jesus?
- What does it mean to “deny oneself”?
- And perhaps most importantly, *how do I take up my cross? What does this mean?*
- This cross-taking is something done *daily*.

You see then that it is impossible to quickly read even this one verse in this section of 5 verses and come away with real understanding of what Jesus is saying.

So let's make some observations and ask some questions.

1. Jesus uses *universal* terminology.

If anyone. He said to all. Jesus had just fed the 5,000, then He spoke privately to His disciples – this is when Peter was sternly rebuked by Jesus for selfishly trying to convince Jesus not to go to Jerusalem (“Get behind Me, Satan”). But Mark’s account shows us some added detail:

Mar 8:33-38 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” (34) **And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them,** “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (35) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (36) For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (37) For what can a man give in return for his soul? (38) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be

ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

“And calling the crowd to him with his disciples...”. He is therefore speaking to the crowd. *If anyone. He said to all.* His words therefore are spoken to US as well.

Jesus sets before us what I suppose could be called *a universal conditional truth*. It is universal because His words apply to all people in every era and in every place. And His words are conditional – *if, then* – for everyone. If anyone would come after Him, if anyone would *follow Him*, then a certain universal condition must be met. There are no exceptions. Following Christ has a requirement.

And I suppose there is still another aspect of this “if” and “would” terminology. The words imply that there are people who “would,” who might “desire,” who are thinking about following Him...but it is by no means *certain* that they will.

Luk 9:57-62 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” (58) And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (59) To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” (60) And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” (61) Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” (62) Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

If...you see. A condition. And it is universal – no exceptions.

What is it?

“...let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Here is the heart of our subject. *What does Jesus mean when He*

says that in order to follow Him, we must take up our cross?

Listen to Mark's account once more – it gives us a clear picture of the setting:

Mar 8:33-38 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” (34) **And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them,** “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

See it? Jesus had just rebuked Peter with these words – *“You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*

Jesus was headed for Jerusalem. He was headed for the cross and He had just told His disciples this is where He was going:

Mar 8:31-32 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be

rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. (32) And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

If anyone would follow Jesus, if anyone would come after Him and be His disciple, if anyone would save their soul, then they must walk in the footsteps of Christ *and those footsteps lead to the cross.*

To take up OUR cross is just this – *to die.*

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

Now this dying is a *daily dying.* It is not some one time literal death, as being burned at the stake or some similar death. This dying (which is what a cross is all about – it is an instrument of execution)...this dying is, well listen to it once more:

Luk 9:23-27 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let

him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (24) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (25) For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? (26) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words....

It is,

- Dying to oneself
- Following Jesus instead of going our own way
- Losing our life for the sake of Christ
- Giving up the world for Christ
- Confessing Christ before men rather than being ashamed of Him
- Setting our minds on the things of God and turning from the things of man

The essence of *taking up our cross* then is *dying to oneself*. And ultimately this is what happens when we are born again – *we die with Christ and are raised up as new creations*. We really do follow

Him to that cross in Jerusalem. And when we do, when we are born again, our old desires and thinking and mindset dies as well.

Listen to William Hendriksen explain it – this is great! –

“What, then, must a person do in order to be considered a true disciple? Well, if he wishes to come behind me, says Jesus, then first he must deny himself; that is, he must once and for all say *No* to his old self, the self as it is apart from regenerating grace. A person who denies himself gives up all reliance on whatever he is by nature, and depends for salvation on God alone. He turns away in dismay not only from whatever thoughts and habits are patently sinful but even from reliance on ‘religious’ thought patterns that cannot be harmonized with trust in Christ. He must be willing to say with Paul, ‘Such things that once were gains to me these have I counted loss for Christ....’.

Secondly, he must take up his cross. The underlying figure is that

of a condemned man who is forced to take up and carry his own cross to the place of execution. However, what the convict does under duress, the disciple of Christ does willingly. He voluntarily and decisively accepts the pain, shame, and persecution that is going to be *his* particular – note: *his*, not someone else’s – lot because of his loyalty to Christ and His cause. Luke has even retained Jesus’ insistence on making the taking up of one’s cross a *daily* assignment.

Finally, he must begin to follow and must keep on following Jesus. Here following the Master means trusting him, walking in his footsteps, and obeying his commands out of gratitude for salvation in him.

To summarize, verse 23 may be paraphrased as follows: ‘If anyone wishes to be counted as my adherent, he must once and for all say farewell to self, decisively accept pain, shame, and persecution for my sake and in my cause – day in, day out – and must then keep on following me as my disciple. He must subject himself

to my discipline. [Gospel of Luke, New Testament Commentary, Hendriksen]

We should take note of a related warning which Hendriksen gives here:

“An error to be guarded against is the notion that a person would be able *in his own power* to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the Savior. Conversion, as well as the process of sanctification, though certainly a human responsibility, is impossible without being born again, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in man’s heart. Moreover, that Spirit does not leave man to his own resources once the latter has been reborn, but remains with him forever, enabling him to do what otherwise he would not be able to do.” [Ibid]

In our text, however, Jesus is emphasizing human responsibility. We must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him.

These things are not a matter of mere life and death – they are matters of ETERNAL life or ETERNAL death.

(24) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.
(25) For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? (26) For 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.

To take up our cross then, to deny self in order to follow Christ is a matter of giving up this present world and all of its toys and trinkets, gold and jewels, reputation and fame, to name the name of Christ. It is to unashamedly confess Christ, knowing that to lose all of these things which characterize “life” in this world, is to, in the End, save our soul and be with Him in the glory of the new creation when He comes again.

And so the question –

Have I and am I daily taking up my cross to die to self so that I can follow Christ? Am I a man/woman of this present world seeking fulfillment and ‘life’ here and now, or am I dead to who I once was and alive in Christ?

If...then. Will I save my life for myself, or lose it for Christ?

The story is often told of how John Bunyan heard a sermon one Sunday morning against the evils of Sunday sporting. That afternoon, while playing "cats", [Cat. . .A player stands at a little distance, and endeavors to throw this missile into a hole or circle previously made. Another stands over the circle, and defends it with his stick] Bunyan heard a voice in his heart which said, "Will you leave your sins and go to Heaven, or have your sins and go to hell?" Those words would not leave him over the next few months.

May they never leave us either.