

PM Matthew 16:13-28 The cost of following Christ

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[0 : 00] Gospel of Matthew in chapter 16, we're going to be looking in particular at verses 24 and 25 and 26 this evening in Matthew's Gospel, in Matthew chapter 16.

And quite often when we read the Bible we come to various different portions of Scripture what have different emphasis on them.

Sometimes God in His Word is encouraging His people and other times He's instructing and guiding and encouraging.

Other times He's rebuking and as I've been preaching on the midweeks in the book of Amos that is very much a book of judgment. And God is blowing a trumpet in that book of warning the people, calling them to repentance as judgment is coming.

And in the passage tonight here we see Jesus speaking and it's very much a challenging passage that we read tonight. And Jesus is giving a very strong and convicting word here this evening to both us and the disciples at the time when He said it.

[1 : 23] So Matthew chapter 16 and we'll read from verse 13 to 28. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

He said to them, But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

[2 : 54] And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan, you are a hindrance to me.

For you are not set in your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then Jesus told His disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what He has done.

Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Amen.

[4 : 03] We're going to sing again now in the Sing-Song account, but just in Mark's Gospel. Mark chapter 8, verses 31 through to 9, chapter 9, verse 1.

And it's on page 1018 on the Church Bibles. Page 1018, Mark chapter 8, verse 31.

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.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 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.

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.

[5 : 13] For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? 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 he said to them, Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.

Amen. Let's come before the Lord in prayer again. 16, and from verse 24, we'll be looking at this evening.

In the passage of scripture we are looking at tonight, we see Jesus talking to his disciples. And as we read in the account in Mark's Gospel in chapter 8, there was also a crowd of people as well, round about.

[6 : 31] And what Jesus is teaching them is not a particular hard to understand message, but the results of obeying what Jesus commands are life changing.

And it goes against everything that the world says today as well. This portion of scripture speaks against the false gospels that are around today as well, and that of the prosperity gospel of health and wealth, that if you follow Christ you will have plenty of money and you will have health, and that all will be well in your life.

That God has a great and wonderful plan for your life if you follow Christ as well. All this speaks against these false teachings that are around. And Jesus speaks plainly here that to follow him comes with a cost.

And Jesus is here asking the crowd and his disciples, and even us tonight, are you willing to follow him no matter what the cost? And this is not the first time Jesus has spoken of the high cost of discipleship.

In Matthew 10, verse 37 and 39, Jesus said, Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

[7 : 58] And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

He told the rich young man in Mark chapter 10, verse 21, And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, You lack one thing.

Go sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. And in John chapter 12, verse 24, To some Greeks who wanted to see Jesus, he replied this to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

[9 : 18] Jesus challenges his hearers now, straight off the back of what we just read in the first part of Matthew chapter 16, in verse 21.

When he was telling his disciples that he must suffer, in verses 21 to 23. And that he was ready and willing to suffer. And now shows them that they must be ready and willing to suffer.

It's a very heavy and a powerful and convicting message Jesus gives. If you look at verse 24 now, especially the last part of it, then Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

The end part of this verse, follow me. This verse would no doubt have reminded his disciples of the time Jesus called each of them two and a half years earlier.

They had left families, friends, occupations, and everything else in order to follow Jesus. In Matthew 9, verse 9, we read the calling of Matthew.

[10 : 31] As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, Follow me.

And he rose and followed him. Simon and Andrew were fishing on the Sea of Galilee, when likewise Jesus called them to follow him. And James and John were repairing nets.

And that's recorded in Matthew 5, verses 18 to 22 as well. And the Lord is calling here for his followers to follow him.

And in the account in Luke's Gospel, chapter 9, verse 23 records, And he said to all, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

This is the heart of Christian discipleship. Following Christ is on his terms, just as coming to him for salvation is on his terms.

[11 : 33] Three different theologians call this passage a paradox, that Christian discipleship is winning by losing. It involves self-denial, cross-bearing, and loyal obedience.

The first thing Jesus asks of his followers is to deny himself. The word deny means to completely disown, or utterly separate yourself from someone, or oneself from someone.

It is the word Jesus used to describe Peter, when he, Peter's denial of him in Matthew 26, while he was being questioned by the high priest.

Each time he was confronted about his relationship, this is Peter, each time Peter was confronted about his relationship to Jesus, Peter, more vehemently, denied knowing him.

He disowned his master before the world. That type of denial, is the exact kind of denial, a believer is to make, toward himself. You cannot be a follower of Jesus, if you are, you cannot be a follower of Jesus, if you are pursuing your own desires, and pleasures.

[12 : 50] You must stop living for self, you must deny association, with your old life. You must reject self, and reject your, love of self, and self pursuits, self ambitions, self wishes, self will, self sufficiency, and self righteousness.

Your life, no longer belongs to you, when you start following Christ. Your life, is no longer what you want to do, but what Jesus wants you to do. You have been bought, with a price, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are a bond servant, therefore you are called, to glorify God, with yourself. We all, always need, to remind ourselves, of this, as believers, that the Christian life, is not about me, not what I want to do, I must die to self, but it is about, what Jesus wants me to do.

Jesus said, in the first part of the verse, let him, deny himself. Arthur Pink wrote, growth in grace, growth in grace, is growth downward, it is the forming, of a lower estimate, of ourselves, it is a deepening, realization, of our nothingness, it is a heartfelt, recognition, that we are not worthy, of the least, of God's mercies.

To be saved, calls a sinner, to deny self, to repent, as Colossians 3, verse 5 says, put to death, therefore, what is earthly, in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passions, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry, on account of these, the wrath of God, is coming.

[14 : 44] The second requirement, of discipleship, is to take up, his cross. This statement, has a profound meaning, which must be understood. Taking up one's cross, is not something, mystical, or level, of selflessness, or deeper, spiritual life, that only certain people, can attain, or hope to achieve, nor is it, the common trials, and hardships, that all people experience.

Carrying a cross, is not having, a hard job, or lack of money, or food, or having some, physical handicap, or incurable disease. All these are very, much granted trials, but this is not, what Christ is getting at, in this passage.

To take up one's cross, is simply, to be willing to pay, any price, for Christ's sake. It is willingness, to endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution, and even willingness, to die for his sake.

To the people, of Jesus' day, the cross, was a very strong, and real, clear reality. It was the instrument, of execution, reserved, for Rome's, worst enemies.

It was a symbol, of the torture, and death, that awaited anyone, who opposed, Roman authority. It is estimated, that perhaps, 30,000 crucifixions, occurred, under Roman authority, during Jesus' lifetime.

[16 : 17] When the disciples, and the crowd, heard Jesus say this, they would have pictured, a poor, condemned soul, walking along the road, carrying a cross, for his own execution.

A man, who took up his cross, began his death march. Jesus, asks us, this question, here, now, tonight. Are you willing, to start, on a death march?

Not every believer, suffers the same degree, of persecution, and suffering. Not every apostle, was martyred, but all of them, were willing, to be martyred.

Not every follower, of Christ, is called on, to be martyred, but all, are commanded, to be willing, to be martyred. To follow Jesus, is to come, to the end of self, and sin, and to desire Christ, and his forgiveness, and righteousness, that you will make, any sacrifice, for him.

Christ, does not call, disciples to himself, to make their lives, easy, and prosperous, but to make them, holy, and productive. Willingness, to take up his cross, is the mark, of the true disciple.

[17 : 29] Charles Spurgeon, said, there are no, crown wearers, in heaven, that haven't been, cross bearers, in this world. The third, requirement, of discipleship, is loyal obedience.

Only after, a person denies himself, and takes up his cross, is he prepared, to follow me. Jesus says, in 1 John, we read, in chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, but whoever, keeps his word, in him, truly, the love of God, is perfected.

By this, we may know, that we are in him. Whoever says, he abides in him, or to walk, in the same way, in which he walked. Now, we come to the paradox, of the discipleship.

If we read, Matthew 16, verse 25, for whoever, would save his life, will lose it, but whoever, loses his life, for my sake, will find it.

What may seem, to be a complex, and contradictory, statement, that Jesus makes, is really quite, a simple one. Jesus is saying, whoever lives, only to save, his earthly, physical life, his ease, his comfort, and his acceptance, in this world, will lose, his opportunity, for eternal life.

[18 : 54] But whoever, is willing, to give up, his earthly, worldly life, and to suffer, and die, if necessary, for Christ's sake, will find, eternal life.

Every person, has a choice. He can go, follow, his desires, of his own heart, and lose, his life forever, in hell, or forsake, his life now, and gain it, forever, in heaven.

Eternity, is at stake here. If we read, in verse 26, now, for what will, it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?

Or what shall a man give, in return, for his soul? Now, Jesus says, even if you possessed, the whole world, of what lasting benefit, would that be, if in gaining it, you forfeited your soul?

Your eternal life. Such a person, would be, a walking dead man, who temporarily, owned everything, but who faced, an eternity, in hell, rather than in heaven.

[20 : 02] What could possibly, be worth having, during this lifetime, if to gain it, you have to exchange, your soul? To gain, every possession, in this world, and yet be, without Christ, is to be empty, and lost, forever.

But to abandon, everything, in this world, for Jesus, is to be rich, forever. Jesus said, in Matthew 6, verses 19 to 21, do not, lay up for yourselves, treasures, on earth, where moth, and rust, destroy, where thieves, break in, and steal, but lay up for yourselves, treasures, in heaven, where neither moth, nor rust, destroy, and where thieves, do not break in, and steal, for where your treasure is, there your heart, will be also.

Are you willing to follow Christ, no matter what the cost? John MacArthur tells a story, of a plantation slave, in the old south, in America, who was always happy, and singing.

No matter what happened to him, his joy was always abounding. One day, his master asked him, what have you got, that makes you so happy?

The slave replied, I love the Lord Jesus Christ, he has forgiven my sin, and put a song, in my heart. Well how do I get, what you have, his master asked.

[21 : 37] You go, and put on your best Sunday suit, and you come down here, and work in the mud with us, and you have it, and you can have it, came the reply. I would never do that, the owner retorted indignantly, as he rode off in a huff.

Some weeks later, the master asked the same question, and was given the same answer. A few weeks later, he came a third time, and said, now be straight with me, what do I have to do, to have what you have?

Just what I have told you, the other times, came the answer. In desperation, the owner said, all right, I'll do it. Now, you don't have to do it, the slave said, you only had, to be willing, and likewise, with being a disciple, of Jesus, it's not that a disciple, has to be a martyr, but that he is willing, to be a martyr, if faithfulness to Christ, demands it.

The call, to salvation, is a call, to discipleship, as described, in this passage, when God saves, he produces, this kind of follower.

In 2nd Corinthians 5, verse 17, therefore, if anyone, is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old, has passed away, behold, the new has come.

[23 : 03] Let's pray. Oh Lord, we thank you, for your word, we thank you Lord, for the word, and what speaks, to our hearts, and our souls, we cannot be, but open, and convicted, before you, how, when we read it, we see how, lacking we are, before your sight, and how we need, your forgiveness, and Lord, we thank you, that your arms, are open, and that you are, willing to save, sinners, and all who come, to you, and cry out, for, for forgiveness, of their sins, we pray Lord, that, you would help us, to die to ourselves, Lord, how, how we, how hard that is, and, our old, flesh, even as believers, so easily clings, to us, and how we, want to follow, our own desires, and our own ways,

Lord, we pray, that you would help us, to put to death, the things of the flesh, and, and that we would seek, to honor you, and, and follow you, no matter where, you ask us to go, we pray, that you would help us, to be faithful, we, pray, that you would give us, grace, in time of need, as well, Lord, none of us know, what you will ask of us, and Lord, we pray, that you would, help us, to be faithful, in what you do, ask of us, and, we pray, that, you would, help us, to grow on, in the faith, and we pray, for any present tonight, who do not know you, we pray, Lord, that you would work, in their hearts, that you would, convict them, of their sin, and their need, to turn to Christ, as we've read tonight, how eternity, is at stake, what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, but yet loses his soul, in hell, for eternity, Lord, what a terrible place, we, we do, thank you, that, there is heaven, awaiting those, who, are following you, we, we, we pray, that you would help us, to look forward, to that as well, and, and the glories, that awaits there, and, each and every one, who has been martyred, for your name, is in glory now, and not one of them, would be, regretting, following you, we, we, pray,

Lord, now, and that you would, be with us this evening, now, in Jesus name, Amen.
Amen.