

All or Nothing

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[0 : 0 0] Greetings in the name of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior. And also greetings from your sister church in Bloominort, Cornerstone Church.

And that's where I am as an assistant pastor there. And there was a time when we came more frequently here, but you have your own servants now.

And we don't come here very often and it seems like there's a lot of new faces. And I just want to welcome each one, each new person that I see and also those that I've seen before.

And it seems that throughout the Christian community that churches are filling up.

And that is a wonderful problem to have. And Lord, our church is like that too. We have a great outreach it seems like. And it just seems like people are more hungry for the Word.

[1 : 1 1] And my prayer is that the Lord will have a rich blessing for each one here this morning. Being a part of the body of Christ has so many privileges.

And with privileges there also come responsibilities. And one of the privileges that I, for myself, so often feel that I don't hold dear enough.

And that is that we bear His name. We bear the name of Christ. In Acts 11, 26, it reads, And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

The disciples, they were given the name Christian because of how much they resembled the Lord Jesus. And it was an honor for them and it also brought persecution from those that did not.

The other day, I heard someone say that he wanted to be a Christian, but not completely. And it really struck me and it really got me to thinking.

[2 : 2 9] He understood that there were things in his life that Christ could not be part of. He wanted to be Christian, but not completely.

There were things in his life that he still didn't want to let go of. That the disciples didn't call themselves Christians. Others saw that they resembled Christ.

So that gave them that name. That gave them the name of Christ. The Bible doesn't teach that we can be half Christian. It's either in or out.

Christianity is a way of life. And what people saw in the disciples is that their way of life was changing. There was something about them that was different.

The early church also suffered because they too wanted to see people saved just like Jesus. In this passage that was read for us in Mark 8, we see Jesus talking about the life of a Christian and how it resembles himself.

[3 : 3 7] There is no such thing as a part-time Christian. Either we are all in or we are all out. And I have titled this morning's message, All or Nothing.

And I want to bow for a word of prayer and commit this to him in prayer. Lord, Heavenly Father, Lord, you have given us your word.

You have given us your spirit to lead us into all the truth. And Lord, this morning as we look into this very short passage of scripture, Lord, Lord, I just pray that you would teach us the truth of it.

And Lord, that we would desire to live what your word says. And Lord, that we would truly be out there. And Lord, that people would look at us and say, We are Christian because we resemble Christ.

And so, Lord, may you be honored and glorified. In Jesus' name, amen. In this passage of scripture, we see a prophet and a loss.

[4 : 49] We see loss. And we have been given the choice to choose one. We can't have both. And as a parent, we would like all of our children to be Christian.

I think that is one of the greatest desires that parents have when, as their children are growing up, they want them also to be Christian.

Not just in word, but also in deed. In Deuteronomy 30, verse 19 and 20, just before the children of Israel are to go over into the promised land, they're given a choice.

And this choice has to do with life and death. Which one of us would not rather choose life? Here in, I want to read Deuteronomy 30.

If you have your Bibles, you can turn with me. Deuteronomy chapter 30. Verse 19.

[5 : 52] I call heaven and earth's day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him, for he is thy life and the length of thy days, that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord swear unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

So here we have God giving the children of Israel a choice. And he says, I have called heaven and earth to record this day.

He says, This choice that you'll be making will be recorded. And also this choice that they will be making will not just be for them.

It will affect generations to come. And when I think of ourselves as making choices in our daily walk, it is not just for ourselves.

It is especially for our children and also for generations. And then in verse 20 he says, That thou mayest love the Lord thy God. The choices that we make give us the ability to love or to not love the Lord.

[7 : 22] And then he says, That thou mayest obey his voice. It seems to be a progression from our choices as we make choices in life. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see some astonishing similarities in the way that he taught.

Jesus would often attract big crowds with his miracles and healings. Anybody that would come to him, he would heal them. And this would attract big crowds.

It talks about multitudes of people. And when he fed the thousands, there were just a lot of people there. But whenever he would attract a big crowd of people, he would up the ante.

He would get into some kind of a teaching that all of a sudden he would see that the people would disperse. They all wanted to come for the healings. But when there was some real down-to-earth teaching, a lot of times you would see the people, they would leave.

He would tell them about the high cost of following him. And the crowds would vanish. Jesus wanted them to know that being his disciple would come at a high cost.

[8 : 41] Verse 34 of our text. Is one of those times. Verse 34 says, As when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

The first thing is, we see here is that the invitation is to everyone. This invitation that Jesus gives isn't just to a certain few.

It isn't just to some special people. He says, Whosoever. Romans 10 verse 13 says, For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So there is that thought of, everyone can come to Jesus. But this is an invitation to follow him. It comes, first it comes at a place where we have to hear the invitation.

This is not just being there, it is walking with him, taking part in what he is doing. When Jesus spoke these words, his twelve disciples, the ones that he had called initially, they surely remembered when they had been called to follow him.

[10 : 06] They had left family, friends, they had left their occupation, they had left everything. They just dropped it, and they followed.

But to the rest of the crowd that day, this was a personal, a call to a personal commitment to follow Christ. It was a call for them to turn their backs on everything else.

Jesus teaches that the way to heaven is through a narrow gate and down a narrow path. When we think of a narrow gate and a narrow path, it automatically tells us that there won't be room for more than just ourselves.

That is the picture that Jesus is painting in Matthew chapter 7, verse 13 and 14, where it says, Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. This gives a picture that we won't be taking everything on this journey, everything that we have with us.

[11 : 25] Going through this gate and traveling this path means that we will have to let go of things that used to define us. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself.

When we think of the word deny, it literally means to disown, to completely disown. This is the same word that we see where the apostle Peter denied Jesus.

And I want to read that passage in Matthew chapter 26. When I saw the things that Jesus did, or Peter did to deny Jesus, it just really struck me what Jesus is actually talking about.

I want to read verses 69 to 75. This is after Jesus has been taken, and Jesus had already told Peter that he would deny himself.

And so here we have the passage that talks about that. Verse 69, Now Peter sat without in the palace, and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also was with Jesus of Galilee.

[12 : 42] But he nighed for them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he had gone out into the porch, another maid saw him and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee.

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And he went out and wept bitterly. So here we have that same word that Jesus is using in our text. But what is interesting to note is that this denying of himself had a progression.

Just says, No, I don't know the man. And then he says with an oath, I don't know this man.

[13 : 55] And last of all, he curses and swears, I don't know this man. When we think of what Jesus is teaching his disciples or the people here, when he says to deny himself, I believe this is kind of the progression that we too will be going through.

As we get persecuted, that denying of self will become stronger and stronger. It is something that at first, it seems like an easy thing to do.

We don't have to swear. We don't have to do anything of that. But as time goes on, denying self becomes more powerful. And that is what the Apostle Peter did here.

When he denied Jesus, they really wanted to tell him, Yeah, you are one of them. And he just, when we deny something, it just becomes bigger and bigger. Our flesh doesn't want to be denied.

When we think of denying our flesh, there's so many things that our flesh just really, really loves. And just to deny a simple thing can already be hard.

[15 : 16] I know that I've tried to deny myself of sugar. Just one single thing. And my body just, just hates that.

He doesn't want to be denied of anything. And when Jesus says denying himself, he knows that this is going to be hard. This isn't something that we will just, okay, now I have denied myself.

It will be like the Apostle Peter. He had to curse. He had to really make sure that this is not, I do not know Jesus.

And I, God wants us to do that with our body. To deny it completely. This is not something that comes natural to us.

Only after we have denied ourself can we take up our cross. That is the progression of what Jesus is talking about here. He says, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself.

[16 : 20] And then he says, when we have denied ourself, we are to take up our, the cross that he has prepared for us. To take it, to take up our own cross had much meaning for the people in Jesus' day.

And that day, a cross was not a piece of jewelry or a decoration. A cross was an instrument of shame, humiliation, suffering, torture, and death.

When a man took up his cross, it was because he was sentenced to death. When Jesus tells his disciples to take up their own cross and follow him, he is calling to a commitment.

He is calling them to something that he has personally prepared for you and for me. every one of us has a different cross to bear, but it is designed especially for us.

To take up our own cross means that we are willing to identify ourselves with Jesus Christ, his death, his word, regardless of what it costs, regardless of the cost, personally, publicly, and financially.

[17 : 41] Jesus says that he has prepared a cross for us to take it up. And when we take up our cross, it means that we are fully committed and there is no turning back.

As the song goes, though none go with me, I still will follow. No turning back. No turning back. That is the emphasis that Jesus puts on this passage.

As it progresses, there is no, as a Christian, there is no turning back. We move forward. The phrase, follow me, suggests that there will be a journey.

And the price of discipleship is very high. Genuine salvation is about a radical commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the key word is Lord.

Has Jesus really become our Lord? And when we come to him for salvation, we are giving up all of our rights. Then in verses 35, Jesus shares a paradox.

[18 : 46] A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory, but is still true. These three verses are designed to teach us that the spiritual side of our lives is far more important than the material side.

That is not the way most of us think. Most of us think of our life entirely in the physical sense.

We work six days a week for our physical well-being, our material needs. But here in this passage, Jesus puts the spiritual sense ahead of us, ahead of our physical needs.

verse 35 says, for whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospels, the same shall save it.

Again, we see the word whosoever. He gives this invitation to everyone. If our life on earth portrays that we spend all our time on the physical, we will suffer loss.

[19 : 53] That is the underlying, that is what he is saying here. But if the spiritual part of our life has taken prominence in our life, we will have compassion for those that don't know Jesus.

We will be like Christ. That is why he preached. He wanted them to hear the gospel. He wanted them to be saved. Our flesh will not be pleased with us when we go in the spiritual sense.

The Apostle Paul talks about this war between the flesh and our spirit and I want to read that in Romans chapter 7. We can very easily read a passage like this and we can just kind of push it off and think that it is not that important when we have, when it says we need to deny ourselves and take up his cross.

But here we see even the Apostle Paul is struggling. He sees that there is that fight. When we look at the Apostle Paul and his writings and his life, we tend to Apostle than ourselves.

But in God's eyes there is no such thing. We as humans, we all struggle with the same, same things. I want to read verse 21 to the end of the chapter.

[21 : 20] Verse 25. Verse 21 says, I find then a law that when I do good, evil is present with me. So there is that law. It seems like it happens to every one of us.

When there is good, evil is present. Every time we want to do what God says, he says that there will be another force that will try and take us away from that.

Verse 22 says, For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. So he recognizes that there is an inward man and there is also an outward man.

From the heart he wants to do what is right. But then he says in verse 23, But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

He is recognizing that there will be times when the flesh will be able to take over, will be in control. And then in verse 24 it says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

[22 : 33] I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is through Jesus Christ he says that we can be delivered from this body of death. So then with my mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.

So we see that this is a part of us that is in the journey. It doesn't just happen, it's not just a one time deal. We do it throughout our life.

We fight against our flesh wanting to take over. Then in verse 36 Jesus asked a powerful question. Going back to our text in Mark chapter 8.

Mark For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

Here Jesus takes it to another level. He says, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world? When we think of the whole world gaining the whole world more than likely none of us will ever get anywhere near to being in control of the whole world.

[24 : 03] But there are many people in our day today that are fairly rich. They have enough for their whole lifetime and for more than that.

But how does 70 or 80 years of having everything compare to losing one's soul? I believe that is kind of the thought that he is bringing out here.

We can have everything we want and I think most of us we have have it fairly good. But he says, how does that compare? to eternity?

Jesus told a story about a man who experienced such a fate in Luke 16. I won't want to turn there. But this man, he lived his life in the lap of luxury and then he died and went to hell.

Jesus isn't saying here in that passage that having all of these things is what takes us to hell. It's the story. when he arrived there, all the money and all the pleasure, all the power he had enjoyed in this life were useless.

[25 : 17] That is exactly where each one of us will find ourselves. We will find ourselves that all we have had here will have had nothing. All the physical things, it is only where our soul is going to go.

Riches by themselves do not send a person to hell, but many people sell their soul. I think that is what he is talking about. What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?

Our soul is the only part of us that will live forever. Our body will die and be buried but our soul will live on in either heaven or in hell.

So what is our soul worth? How could we possibly put a price on it in the physical sense? Satan, the ruler of this world has many things to offer us if we will only give up our soul.

He did that when Jesus was hungry. He did that for him and he is going to do that for us. Then in verse 38 we see that Jesus ends this passage with a penalty to take his message seriously.

[26 : 37] Again he says whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him also shall the son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his father and the holy angels.

The word ashamed has the meaning of being embarrassed. or hesitant to tell people about our walk with Jesus. Being uncomfortable when someone asks us about Jesus.

When we call ourselves a Christian it has to be about what Christ is doing in our life. And the most important and must be important enough to talk about.

Are we willing to share what Jesus is doing in our life? Or are we ashamed of him when someone asks us about him?

Jesus says whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him also shall the son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels.

[28 : 01] If it's one way it's also going to be the other way. In Matthew 7 verse 11 Jesus says not everyone that saith unto me Lord Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.

When we come to Jesus he wants us to follow him and he says that there is a price that we will have to pay.

As a believer we must reject the world and its ways choosing instead to deny self and take up our cross and walk with him.

and also be willing to be persecuted. Be willing to talk about him. I know as Mennonites it seems like we have a culture where it is so hard.

We've been taught not to talk about Jesus. We've been taught to not talk about what he is doing in our life. But that is not what Jesus teaches.

[29 : 17] I think for myself and maybe many of you here this is one of the hardest things to talk about Jesus to someone that doesn't know him.

The believer must reject the world and its ways choosing instead to walk with Jesus and be willing to be persecuted and reproached and even hated because we carry his name.

Because of his name the Jews persecuted him. How could Jesus how could a man be God?

That is what Jesus claimed to be. Because of who he was he was persecuted. this pattern didn't start with the church age.

It didn't start with the time after Jesus was here. We see that it also was in Moses' day. I want to read Hebrews 11, 24-26 where Moses already sees in front of him.

[30 : 37] Hebrews 11, 24-26 by faith Moses when he was come of years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to suffer the affliction of the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of season sin for a season esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Pharaoh was considered to be the world. He was what the world was.

Choosing rather to suffer the afflictions of the people of God than to enjoy being part of the world, the pleasures of sin and the Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.

He was looking ahead. So in God's economy we're either all in or all out.

I don't know if there's any sports fans here today. I want to read a passage in 1 Corinthians 9.

[32 : 10] I'm still a little bit of a sports fan or maybe a lot or my wife would say a lot anyhow but I don't think sports was something happened in the 20th century.

I think sports has always been. I want to read 1 Corinthians 9 verse 24 to 27 verse 24 25 is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run not as uncertainty so fight I not as one that beat the air but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

When we watch a game, the team that plays the full 60 minutes wins. Here Jesus, or the Apostle Paul says, Know ye not that they which run in a race, they run all.

God has given each one of us a race. But we have to run all the time. We have to run our full life.

[34 : 05] We have to keep pushing forward. That is what sports teaches us. If you work, and sometimes when you look at how much they have to give, how much their bodies have to suffer, how much they go through, as they push forward, they still cannot give one minute, stop for one minute, if they want to win.

They have to push the full 60 minutes. I believe that is a very beautiful picture of what Jesus is teaching us. We need to lay off.

Our flesh cannot be in control. When it's uncomfortable, when our flesh says, it is uncomfortable, I don't want to do this. Jesus says, push forward.

Spiritually, we can do it. I want to close with Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1 and 2.

Hebrews 12, verse 1. Hebrews 12, verse 1. Therefore, seeing, we also are compassed with so great a cloud of witnesses. He starts off with telling us that, don't think that you're the only one running in this race.

[35 : 33] There's a lot of people that have gone. And he gives us the picture that they're cheering us on. They know how hard it is for us.

They're there. They've been there. And they've succeeded. Seeing, we have also, we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. And then he says, let us lay aside every weight and sin which thus so easily beset us.

I think each one of us understands that we have stuff in our life that keeps us from running full out, full force, that we are walking with Jesus all the time.

He says, lay aside these things and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. What God has for me isn't what God has for you.

God has a special race set for each one of us. And he says, run with patience. Then verse 2, he says, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising that down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[36 : 54] He endured the cross. That gives us the picture that our cross, that God puts on us, will take endurance.

repentance. It's not going to be something that will just come with us. He says, take up your cross and follow me. Jesus endured the cross.

We too will endure the cross. And when we do, we too will cross the finish line. When we keep our eyes on Jesus, the race before us doesn't look that daunting.

Jesus endured the cross knowing that it would draw many people to himself. And I believe that is each one of our mandates or part of our cross that we too become someone that that people want to follow us because they know that we're following the Lord, the creator of the universe.

My prayer is if we have come to him, we have made that decision to come to him, we will also take up our cross and follow him wherever he leads.

[38 : 23] let's close in prayer. Lord, Father in heaven, Lord, I thank you so much for your word, for the great God that you are in.

And Lord, I just pray that you would give me the strength to press on. And for each one here this morning, Lord, you know the cross that you have laid on each one of us.

Lord, I just pray that you would give us the ability, the strength, and the desire to endure. Lord, to give our bodies, to allow our bodies to be broken, bodies to get tired and still press on.

Lord, that we would not grow weary of well-doing, but Lord, that you would give us the strength to go on. For we see that in your word that there are so many that have gone before us and Lord, they are cheering us on.

Each one of us has a team of cheerleaders cheering us towards the finish line. And so, Lord, again, I just thank you for your presence. Thank you for leading and guiding us in Jesus' precious name.

[39 : 48] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.