

Discipleship and Carrying Our Cross: Luke 9:23-26

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Date: 03 March 2024

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daley preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living. We're delighted to share this sermon with you. Today, we are continuing our sermon series, Sacred Journey from Death to Life.

The title of this sermon is Discipleship and Carrying Our Cross. Now, in your, you should all have a note section.

Feel free to follow along. There are a lot of notes on here, but that is okay. Our main passage of Scripture, it'll be from the Gospel of Luke.

It's specifically from Luke chapter 9, verses 23 through 26. And let us turn our Bibles to page 1030.

[1 : 14] And as we're turning, it is in following Christ that we are choosing the cross over the world.

And no matter what happens to us during the course of our lifetime, God's grace is more powerful than the storms, than the trials, than the tribulations that we face in this life.

We are secure when we believe in the Lord. It is after we believe in Christ that we are on this journey of being a disciple, of being a student of Christ, this spiritual journey, the spiritual walk with Christ.

And in this, we carry our cross. We follow in the footsteps of Christ. So let us read from this Scripture.

Luke chapter 9, verses 23 through 26. Will you read it with me? And He said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me, for whoever would save his life would lose it.

[2 : 39] But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in glory, and the glory of the Father and of the Holy Angels.

Let's finish it off in 27. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God. Let's pray together before we continue.

Father God, as we are in this third week of this sermon series of this sacred journey, we ask that you lead and that you guide us.

Let your words speak through us today. May we come to understand that when we believe, it is not the end, but rather it is the beginning of our life in you.

[3 : 36] May we see that in following Christ, we will be carrying our cross. And we embark on this journey of discipleship, growing in faith in you.

In learning about what it means to be a student and carrying our cross, we ask that you help us to know that in all of this, there is hope in you.

There is strength in you. And there is assurance that comes from you. Open our minds and our hearts to learn the message from today, from your word, and to apply these verses that we may follow in the footsteps of Christ in what we say and what we do.

Let me all say it together, amen. Salvation is the beginning of your story. God loves us so much that we are made in the image of God.

God knew us before we were born, and God sent his Son so that whoever believes shall not perish, but have eternal life. And it is believing the Lord that you are saved and you are secure in the arms of God.

[4 : 49] Jesus paid it all on the cross. And for this, we should be grateful. We should be thankful. And we should be in awe and encouraged for this sacrifice that Christ did for us.

And it is in believing in the Lord that we are born again. In being born again, we are a new creation, and our life in Christ has begun.

Believing in the Lord is not the end. Rather, it is the beginning of your new life. And we are called to be disciples to learn and to grow in the Scriptures and to live out our faith.

And this is what paints the scene for what's happening here. In our scripture reading, we see here that right before it, the disciples learn that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God.

And right before verse 23, Jesus tells of how He, the Son of Man, how He will suffer, die, and be raised up on the third day. And I'd like for us to break down the passages of what we've read.

[5 : 57] Let's start with verse 23. And He said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him what? Deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

And looking at this first verse, we see that Christ is explaining this three-step path for anyone who wishes to follow Him. I must make it clear that this is for people who have believed in the Lord.

The most important and critical thing that you can do is believe in the Lord. In believing, you will be saved. And this means in this verse here, going back to this verse, we're called to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

If God calls you, will you respond? Will you respond to God's call to deny yourself, to take up one's cross and to follow Him?

That is the call for all of us. And I'd like to put on here the three steps that we find from this verse 23 is the denial of self.

[7 : 05] Again, the taking of one's cross and following Him. And as you can see from this slide, you can see that there are three steps here. And it's a great reminder that in the Great Commission, Christ calls for us to become and to make disciples, just as we're also called to be baptized.

This simply means that we are to be learners. We are to be students of the Bible. How many of us have been a student before? Some of us may not like learning.

Some of us may not like homework, right? Do you like learning or do you like homework, right? I know for me, I always try to doing homework. Why do I have to do all of this?

I already know the material. Maybe you can relate, maybe not. But I hope that all of us, we all enjoy being learners or being students because we're always learning and growing.

And certainly for us, it is my hope and my prayer that we all grow in faith. To learn more about the word of God, what it means to be a Christian and to be encouraged to live out the faith.

[8 : 16] The gospel message is to be proclaimed to the lost and to the broken. We do this so that others can hear the word of God and believe in Him just as it says in Romans 10.17, that faith comes from what?

Hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. And as you believe in the Lord, be baptized and follow Him.

Baptism is that public proclamation. It's the public proclamation of an internal decision telling your friends and your family that you are a part of the family of God and that you've decided to live out the faith.

So let's go over that first point here, the denial of self here. Galatians, you have Galatians chapter 2 verse 20. And then you have Romans 12, 1 through 2.

Now to start off, we start by focusing not on our own selfish desires, but focusing on God working in our lives and through our lives.

[9 : 24] It is asking God to transform your very life. And to help us to understand the meaning of what it means to deny oneself, I want to start off with Galatians chapter 2 verse 20.

It says, I have been crucified with Christ. Let's read this part together. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in with me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. It is here where the apostle Paul, it makes the case that he is living by faith in Christ and not by the law.

He denied himself to where Christ dwells within him. What that means is that salvation and transformation comes from believing in Christ.

And then in Romans chapter 1 verse 2, some of you may know this famous verse. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as what?

[10 : 33] As a living sacrifice, right? Holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. I love this next verse. Do not be conformed to this world, but be what?

Transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And we respond to the Lord through belief. It is God who transforms our lives. So to deny oneself is to focus on believing in Christ and letting him transform your life instead of the world.

Instead of letting the world influence you. Can the world transform you? Well, it can in a negative way, right? Some of us may have friends or maybe even family who is worldly.

They may be doing the opposite of going towards Christ, rather going away from Christ. So we must remember that.

[11 : 39] On focusing on Christ rather than the world, this living sacrifice, it speaks of dedication to the Lord, which in turn is the denial of oneself.

And this leads us to the second part, which is taking up one's cross, found in 2 Timothy 2, verses 3 through 4 and the Galatians passage.

When we hear about taking up our cross, I gotta be honest with you. When I was younger and I heard that, I was really freaked out by this. What do you mean by carrying my cross and following the Lord?

Didn't Christ die on the cross? I don't have to do that. That's what I thought when I was a child though. But there's so much meaning that comes from this. It's the understanding that to be a Christian, to carry one's cross, it's not just about suffering.

It is rather being fully committed to living and loving like Jesus Christ. And I want to make this very clear that in carrying your cross, you are not alone.

[12 : 46] Because I think that's one of the fears that people have in carrying your cross. You're going to be alone. You're just going to suffer in this life. And certainly suffering is part of living in this fallen and this broken and dark world.

But in knowing the fact that we are not alone in this, that God is with us and we have the body of Christ, the local church with us to help encourage us, is remarkable.

And let me tell you, that is something that is counter-cultural. That is something that the world does not have to offer. That is something that Christianity has to offer. You are secure in the arms of God.

And even though there will be hills, there will be valleys, right? There will be the highs and lows in this life. No one can snatch you out of the hand of God.

That is why it is so important to believe in the Lord and be saved. That is why on every Sunday, you see that verse on the bottom of your notes. What Christ says, truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

[13 : 54] Not only this, but being a part of the church, being part of the body of Christ, we as Christians, we're called to be there loving one another.

In the good times and in the bad. And there's two verses that stand out to me. I'd like to share with you. Second, Timothy, what does it say? Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. Very military language that you see here. The apostle Paul is writing to Timothy, speaking about enduring trials, right?

About suffering, but in those times helping out others when those trials arise. When you are going through a bad time in your life, whenever you feel lost or alone or you are in sickness or in health, know that God is there for you and your brothers and sisters in Christ are there for you.

That is very powerful. And in doing all of this, we are living out the commandment of Christ to love one another just as Christ loved us.

[15 : 19] Galatians chapter six verse two, it says, what does it say? Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. The church offers something that is unique and it's different than what the world has to offer community.

When we think about the world, how easy is it for someone to, you say something wrong, you do something wrong and people want nothing to do with you, especially in the age of social media, in the age of artificial intelligence and in this age where the media remembers you for any wrong that you do.

That is not forgiveness. That is not the love of Christ. And what better opportunity for us as Christians to show an alternative than what the world has to offer?

I think of that song, what the world needs now is love. What kind of love are we talking about? We're talking about the love of Jesus Christ. For many of us, we seek a place where we wish to belong to something greater than ourselves.

And for some of us, we seek to share in love and in truth. Some of us search for service, doing good for others.

[16:43] When we are bearing one another's burdens, it testifies that when we carry the cross, we are not alone in this life.

We help each other in the body of Christ and we live out the new commandment by supporting and loving one another.

Carrying the cross also means that God is going to work in your life. It is that transformation. Look, living on this earth is not easy.

It's not easy. But in knowing Christ, there is that security, there is that safety, there is that assurance knowing that you are going to happen and no one can take that away from you.

That is beautiful. No politician, no celebrity, no government can take that away from you. Through knowing the Lord and following in Him, we undergo sanctification, this transformation, this increase of knowledge and clarity.

[17:52] That's why you hear me say, focus on the context of the verse and the connections with other verses because in doing that, you'll find consistency in Scripture and through the consistency, you will find clarity in your life.

Salvation is a gift from Christ. It's from the Lord. And discipleship is living out that faith after believing in the Lord.

It is living out that faith in all that we say and all that we do. Let our faith be an active faith, not a dead faith. Whenever I hear that, I'm like, man, that sounds terrible having a dead faith.

Well, it is, but having an active faith is remarkable. The third point here is follow Christ. You have 1 Peter and Philippians here. We come to that third part, which is speaking about following Christ. It is Christ who calls for each and every one of us. Salvation is available for all who believe. So God's invitation is for everyone, much like how we partake in communion.

[19:00] It is being thankful and grateful and remembering the sacrifice that Jesus Christ has for us. Christ calls for us to follow Him because look, He is providing a better way than what we can find.

Searching for fame or searching for fortune or searching for popularity or... Look, I don't have a million followers on social media and I'm okay with that.

Okay, I may have a couple thousand, but that doesn't matter because it's not worth anything. You can have all the subscribers and followers. You can have all the riches in the world, but without Christ, what is the point?

Christ calls all of us. Will you answer that call? It is in Christ that we find new life, we find new identity, and we find transformation.

We find that guidance from the Holy Spirit. And there's two verses that I'd like to put up. The first one is 1 Peter. For this you have been called because Christ also, what?

[20:09] Suffered for you leaving an example so that you might follow in His footsteps. And then there's Philippians chapter 1 verse 21. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

It is Christ that gives us an example and despite the hardships in life, there is nothing to fear, nothing to fear whatsoever.

I'm not afraid of death. I'm not afraid of suffering in this life because I know where I'm going. I know that my God loves me and He's always there for me.

And there's something that's much better than this life. It is in knowing Christ that we should be confident in this life, but most especially the next life.

You have verse 24. So all that was verse 23. Verse 24, for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

[21:16] This is where you find in verse 24, it's expanding. It's just saying that if you do it on your own, if you try to save yourself, if you pray 10,000 prayers, well, that works.

It's not works that save you. It is faith that saves you. If you live for the Lord, if you believe in Him, if you have that faith in Him, you will be saved.

This is just another way that in having Jesus Christ as your Savior and as your Lord, you will be saved. Much like how I mentioned earlier, John chapter 6 verse 47, that will always be on your

notes.

And this gives us the ultimate choice that each of us, we have to think and consider. Will you believe in the Lord and be saved or will you choose to do it on your own?

It's a question that we all have to answer. It is Christ who gave his life for us and gives us the choice to choose him or to not to choose him.

[22 : 22] And I pray that you come to know the Lord and that you believe in Him. I pray that you grow in faith in Him and you follow in those footsteps of Christ. Let's go to verse 25 here.

It's the famous question, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? Verse 25 is where Jesus is asking this very powerful, very thought-provoking question.

What benefit? What profit? What advantage is it for us to have all of the riches? Like I said, all the riches, the fame, the popularity, the likes, whatever it is, but yet lose or forfeit yourself.

This is Christ saying, look, if you have it all, but you don't have me, you're going to lose. That word for world is cosmos.

So you can truly think of having the entire world, the power of having all the world, right? When people are seeking to control countries or nations or controlling the world, what profit?

[23 : 33] What good is it? So what do you lose here? You see in that verse here, let's go back one slide actually. You see on there, right, what good does it do for a man if he gains the whole cosmos?

You see these two words, loses or forfeits, right? So we can go to that next slide. There's two things, Christ is listing two things that will happen.

You will lose and check this out. That is the same word that you find in John 3.16. The word perish and then also perish or be destroyed.

And number two, look, this is not easy. I'm talking about this. You will forfeit yourself, which is to be cast away or to suffer loss. So as I mentioned, the same lose in verse 25 is the same word that you see in perish.

Let's go to John 3.16, right? God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not lose, not perish, it's the same word, but have eternal life.

[24 : 37] And so we have the word forfeit, which only appears a handful of times, but it stands out in Philippians chapter 3 verse 8. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things.

That's the other time it's used. It's very rarely that that word is used. But in showing all of this, I want to encourage you that we come to realize that we may lose all material things in this life, but to know Christ is to have that firm foundation.

It is having that security. It is to be found in him. It is to have that blessed assurance in him. It is knowing that we are safe and secure and knowing that nothing can separate us from the Lord.

But if we change our mind, remember we talked about metanoia, repentance to change your mind and believe in him. It is better to believe in Christ and to lose everything on this earth than to lose everything and perish.

And as we approach the closing of this sermon, I want to share with you the story of Simon of Cyrene. How many of you know this story? Right? You may have heard it. If you haven't, that's all right.

[25 : 55] It's told in Matthew, Mark and Luke. It's found in Matthew 27, 32, Mark 15, 21, and Luke 23, 26.

The story of Simon of Cyrene. I want you to picture this. This is of a man who was placed by the Roman soldiers to help Jesus carry the cross.

That's interesting. It is a powerful demonstration of what it means to follow Christ. The scriptures say that, depends on which gospel account you're using, that Simon was either compelled or was seized in any way.

He was kind of moved over to help Christ carry the cross. And this man, it's interesting in all three gospel accounts here.

It says that he was coming from the country. What that means is he was just passing by. Right? He was just going through. And he probably was unaware of what was happening.

[27 : 00] So can you imagine if you're traveling through and you get stopped and you're told, hey you, hey you, go help this man? And being compelled to do so, or as it also has said, seized to help Christ.

Ooh, I got somewhere to go. I got places to go and people to see. Well, not for Simon of Cyrene. Right? He was going through the country and he ends up helping Christ. He was coming from the country. Now I want you to think about this. Simon was called, much like how we are called, to deny ourselves, to pick up the cross and follow in him. Simon stepped into the role of denying himself because he helped Christ carry that cross. Simon picked up the cross, much like how we too are to carry our cross. And Simon followed Christ, literally followed Christ, much like how we are to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

[28 : 17] In researching for the sermon and reading in this again from a different lens of denying oneself and picking up your cross and following Christ, it's just such a good imagery of thinking about that.

It really makes me think of just this man who's helping Christ. And I hope he realized what he's doing.

I hope he realizes the significance of being called like that. And again, this story, it's a demonstration of what Jesus taught about discipleship and carrying our cross.

You see, God is calling you today. Will you, like Simon, respond to God's call for your life?

Will you pick up your cross and follow Christ? Not out of obligation, but out of compassion, out of a changed mind and out of love?

[29 : 18] Think of this story as an invitation to respond to the call that God has for your life. Let us respond with a yes to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Let's pray together. And Father God, we thank you for the truth that is found in your word today. We ask that you help us to reflect on what it means to have you as the firm foundation to have that faith in you.

May we know what it means to deny ourselves, to pick up our cross and to follow you. May we respond to your call to believe in you, but also to know that we are loved by you and that we are not alone in this life.

For you, God, you will never leave us. You will never abandon us. You will never forsake us. You are there, God, in the good times and in the bad.

Help us to take to heart the message for today. I realize, Father, that this message can be very convicting. It's a very difficult topic, but it is the truth that is from your word.

[30 : 33] May we not be afraid of the truth of your word. May our journey be of one coming to know you and upon knowing you, believing in you, having faith in you, journeying with you in this life.

May we follow in those footsteps of Christ. May you give us grace, wisdom, guidance and confidence knowing that you are with us every step of the way in the journey from here and in our very lives.

It is in Jesus' name that we pray and all God's people say, Amen. Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast. For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

May God's blessings be with you.