

Our King's Cross-Shaped Ministry (part 2)

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[0 : 00] So this is John chapter 6, verses 60 to the end and then beginning in chapter 7 through verse 24. I'm going to read this out loud.

You follow along with your eyes and as you hear God's word and see it, remember this is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear and sufficient word of God. We hear from God himself through his word.

John 6, 60. When many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying, who can listen to it? We're going to review in just a moment what they're referring to.

Verse 61, but Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?

It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.

[1 : 06] For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him. And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.

After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. Jesus answered them, did I not choose you, the twelve?

And yet one of you is a devil. He spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. For he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

Chapter 7, verse 1. After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

[2 : 14] Now the Jews' feast of booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.

For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. For not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, my time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it, that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.

After saying this, he remained in Galilee. Verse 10. But after this, his brothers, after his brothers had gone up to the feast, he also went up, not publicly but in private.

The Jews were looking for him at the feast and saying, where is he? And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said he is a good man, others said no, he is leading the people astray.

[3 : 22] Yet for fear of the Jews, no one spoke openly of him. About the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, how is it that this man has learning when he has never studied?

So Jesus answered them, my teaching is not mine, but is his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory. But the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true. And in him there is no falsehood.

Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me? The crowd answered him, you have a demon. Who is seeking to kill you?

Jesus answered them, I did one work and you marvel at it. Moses gave you circumcision. Not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers. And you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

[4 : 28] If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Well, let's pray. Stand in the middle of your temple, King Jesus, and teach us by your word we ask. Amen. Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, today I want to show you once again the cross-shaped ministry of Jesus. What I tried to show last week is the same thing I want to show you again.

I believe this is why John's arranged it this way. He's showing you that it wasn't only in those final moments of Jesus' life that he was suffering and that he was ministering the ministry of the cross.

[5 : 41] In fact, it was his entire ministry. From the moment he took on flesh, it was God stooping down so low. In every action, and even now as he's opening up and revealing the kingdom of heaven, the way he does this, it takes the shape of the cross.

The reason this matters is because there is no true ministry unless it's Christ ministering. And all of us who are in Christ, we are ambassadors of his kingdom.

We are a nation of priests. We are all ministering Christ. Through you, Christ ministers to those he brings into your life. That's our humbling way of how God is choosing to unveil and further his kingdom on earth.

It's through you, through the church. So I want to show you five more ways in which his ministry was shaped by his cross in today's passage. The first one is that a cross-shaped ministry offends many.

It is offensive and it offends many people. Let me just say one thing quickly. Our goal as Christians should not be to be annoying and to go out offending people.

[6 : 50] That's not it. The point is this. It's the message of Christ himself. There is something happening spiritually. When the gospel and the truth of the kingdom of heaven is proclaimed through God's people in this dark world, it will be offensive.

And you will take arrows back for being such a minister. But that's the way of the cross. That's the type of ministry Christ uses. So be ready. So it offends many.

The cross of Christ was a picture to those who had the whole Bible of offense. It was not in the temple. It's too dirty.

It was not even in the city of Jerusalem because that was representing the place from where God would rule and God is holy. And it was in the most disgusting part outside of the city where the waste and the dead bodies, when plagues would sweep through, they would load them up, haul them out, set them on fire.

And it was like, you've seen those in many parts of the world, you just put your trash and your, you know, disgusting stuff that's left over. You put it all in a big pile and set it on fire. And that's how you get rid of waste.

[8 : 02] And so that's what was right behind the cross of Christ. And the way in which Christ was killed, it was something that Jews could not personally do.

It had to be Gentiles. It had to be the Romans. So the cross is offensive. And our ministry, in the ministry of Jesus was also so offensive because his ministry is shaped by his cross.

When Jesus proclaimed the gospel, our Lord Jesus, we read here, he was rejected by many. Look at verse 61. They took offense at his message. What message was this that they were so offended by?

Well, take your eyes up a couple of verses to verse 58. Jesus had taught them, whoever feeds on this bread will live. Do you remember what he was talking about?

What is the bread he's talking about? It's his own body. His own body. That's an offensive message. You know why you can't believe, Jesus says to them?

[9 : 01] It's not because you need to see more. Look at the verse right before that. Our Lord Jesus says, I'm sorry, look at the verse right in that passage, right after.

It's verse 65. He says, this is what I told you, that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Spirit who gives life. And in verse 62, he said, if you were to even see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before, you would still not believe.

Do you get what he's saying? Then he said this. He said, you have to eat my body to have eternal life. That's offensive. But then he said, no one can do that unless the Father draws them. And then they get so offended, they're grumbling. We might just leave over this. Hold on. What he's saying can't be right. And does Jesus back down? No, he goes even stronger with that same message.

He says, that is exactly why I said no one can believe unless my Father draws him. And the Spirit gives life. You cannot work for your own salvation.

[10:07] That was offensive. And the pride of man without the work of the Spirit to give you a new heart will always be offended by that. But that's the gospel message that offends many.

Look at verse 66. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. Remember, this is the same crowd that Jesus had compassion for.

Because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he's teaching them. They turn their backs. Speak bad about him. Walk away. Reject him. Too offended by the gospel message.

A commentator of 1600s, a particular Baptist named John Gill, he said on this verse, he said, Those who apostatized, who turned their backs and walked away rejecting Christ, they had for a while heard his teaching, seen his signs, followed him, made a credible profession of faith, even received baptism into water.

Yet they were not truly saved. Their hearts were still spiritually dead. That's a good caution to all of us.

[11:23] It's possible to be hearing the message of the gospel, to be near the very, very near where Christ is ministering, and to yet have a dead heart for lack of faith, for lack of repentance and believing.

And if you do repent and believe, you will be the first one to say, It was the Father who drew me to his Son in his kindness. All glory be to God for opening the eyes of a blind man like me.

Well, the numbers today in America and in the West of people turning their back on Christ, rejecting him, or deluding it so far that it's actually another form of apostasy, it's very, very high.

You probably have loved ones and friends or former friends who fit that category. One of my favorite pastors to listen to through his music is Shai Lin.

He was a church planter discipled by Mark Dever, and he pointed out this trend in evangelicalism. He said, Satan's got a plot devised.

[12:27] I'm seeing lots of guys apostatize. What's happening here? It's a different atmosphere. Cats appear most concerned about a rap career. Brother oversees being slain in the sand, while we're vain in our plans, seeking fame and some fans.

But our Lord Jesus Christ cross-shaped ministry, remember just in the middle of the same chapter, 24,000 or so, down to just 12.

That's a cross-shaped ministry. The one of those 12 is one who's going to betray him on top of that. So our entire ministry of Christ, everything we see about him preaches the cross, even how he ministered to those God gave him.

But even with such rejection, the cross-shaped ministry remains trusting in God. That's number two. Jesus trusted in God's power.

In laying down his life on the cross, Jesus trusted that his Father, by the power of the Spirit, would take his life back up again. So according to his human nature, he lays down his life, yet according to his divine nature, he, God himself, takes his life back up again.

[13:47] He trusts in the power of God, even now as he ministers, because his ministry is shaped by his mission on the cross. And in his ministry, Jesus trusted in God's power to draw those who God would to him, and to be faithful to disciple whoever God brought to him.

Look at verse 67. Jesus said to the twelve, Do you want to go away as well? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Eternal life. That's the spiritual life now that belongs to the age to come. That's the life where your soul is alive, united to Christ. And it begins spiritually for you now through the word of Christ.

What a wonderful profession that Peter makes here. Peter is joining many others throughout this gospel who have made a profession of faith, because the Father drew them, the Spirit gave them life, and they believed, and they responded.

We saw in chapter 134, John the Baptist said, I have seen and borne witness of this, that this is the Son of God. And then John the Baptizer also said in chapter 334, He whom God sent utters the

words of God, for he gives spirit without measure.

[15:04] You see, it's the same profession that Peter's making. And then Nathaniel, he ate up Christ. He ate up the words of life that Christ spoke as well. He said, Rabbi, you are the Son of God.

You are the King of Israel. And Peter is one more now who professes such a faith. See, the word of God, it brings truth of the age to come.

It brings that truth to bear on this present evil age with power, with the power of the Holy Spirit. And it changes everything. And that's the best way to explain.

What do you mean reformed? We mean that we're in this present evil age, but it's the life of God from the age to come, that God is working out now in our life, in our soul, in our spirit, and it works its way out.

And that working out is being conformed to the image of God. And it's being reformed by the renewing of our minds. This is the true reality is the spiritual kingdom, and it's coming through the word of God.

[16:05] That's exactly what we want to be about. Because what that does, when it comes with power, it puts the whole life in right order. You know, our lives are out of order because of the curse of Adam.

But the power of the life of God in the age to come, it sets everything back in its place. And it's slow. It's a slow process of sanctification. But that's where we enjoy life in Christ.

And it's taking the worldliness that is so broken our mind, our thinking, our bodies, our temptations, our view of everything. That worldliness gets put way down in its proper place.

And the word of God begins to renew and change how you view everything in life. And a lifetime is too short for that. But we need to be about it. We need to be earnest for that. I love David Wells. He explained worldliness in this way. Worldliness is what makes sin look normal in any age. And righteousness seem odd.

[17:08] Did you catch that? In this world, righteousness seems odd. But when Christ's power comes into your life and you're united to Him and His Spirit fills you and cleanses you and renews you, worldliness now starts to seem odd.

I don't want that. How could I ever have found that attractive? How could I have ever believed some of these lies? This is of the world. And it makes the righteousness to be right with God in His kingdom.

And all of my life said in order, this is what normal should feel like. What power this is. The power of God. Our Jesus Christ trusted that power of God to work.

And even in Peter's profession, He was setting their lives in order. See, Christ was faithful to those few that God brought to Him. And if we are ministering on behalf of Christ, He's ministering through His people, we will trust God's power and we will disciple with faithfulness as best we can with that same power, that same trust that God will work and He will draw whoever He wants to.

Let's be obedient with who He has put in our life for this season. Well, not only is a cross-shaped ministry offensive to many and one that requires you to trust in the power of God alone, it's a ministry that's as low as can be.

[18:30] And yet being low, it's bold. So it's lowly yet bold. From the cross, Jesus yells, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing. And His ministry is shaped by His mission because not from the cross, but back in Jerusalem, in the temple, from the center of the city, Jesus looks at the people God has brought all around Him.

And He says, I have compassion for them. They're sheep without a shepherd. But this is not the point of my ministry now in this first coming. My first coming is about the cross.

And they will reject me. And they will crucify me. I'll be made very low. I don't need their popularity now. And He boldly proclaims the evil of their life and their sin.

Look at chapter 7, verse 2. The Jews' feast of booths was at hand. This is what next week's sermon is going to be about.

So I'm not skipping over this. There's so much richness in here. It's a whole separate thing. Just briefly, this is called the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles. They would build little tents.

[19:44] And sometimes they would use cloth. Other times they would use branches like hyssop because they're very leafy branches. And they would make these booths for a child. This would have been so fun. We get to all go together. We get to camp.

I'll tell you next week about some of the ceremonies they did at the beginning of the day. At the end of the day, Josephus, a historian, he commented, if there was ever a picture of jubilee, of happiness, it was the Feast of Booths.

So that's the scene. Busy, busy, rich typology, which we're going to see next week. Just rich theology built into every element. It began on a Sabbath, a day of rest. It ended on another Sabbath, day of rest.

And so that's the context. Well, the purpose of the Feast of Booths was to look back at how God had sustained his people through the wilderness journeys for 40 years.

And it was also to look forward to how God would be coming now. They're also pilgrims. They're living under the oppression of Rome. They're pilgrims. They're sojourners. But he was bringing the Messiah.

[20 : 42] That was the purpose of it. We read in verse 3 that his brothers, his brothers said to him, you need to leave Galilee up here in this kind of mixed area.

You need to go down to the hub of the nation where the power comes from. You need to go down to Judea and do some of these signs down there. Then you'll really get their attention. Quick comment on the brothers.

We read last week the list from Mark and Matthew of brothers that are named and also some sisters. So they knew the whole family. Now, Uriel actually was looking at this with me.

Some have asked the question, well, if he had other brothers and sisters, why did he entrust his mother to John, who is not a blood brother? And also because it was common to refer to brethren being like your greater clan, you know, cousins and all of that.

Now, if Mary and Joseph did have other children and she got pregnant, her having children and those relations with her husband was not a sin. It does not in any way diminish the virgin birth.

[21 : 42] Christ was born of a virgin. He did not inherit the sin of Adam that was passed through. So all of that stands. I think it's okay to just understand that Mary and Joseph had other children, but that's just a quick clarification there.

So his relatives, they see him, but Jesus knows, okay, you saw my signs. No one's disputing that, but you still don't have faith. And he rejects the popularity that was right there for him to take if that was what God had called him to do.

Verse five, not even his brothers believed in him. They didn't have that saving faith. And this was no fault of Christ. This was no sin of his, no failure of his ministry.

I believe that's another very powerful accusation that Satan wants to throw at the people of God. If you have a loved one or a family member who does not have that saving faith in Christ, it is not your sin, not your fault.

It's no failure of yours. Pray for them. Pray for in God's perfect time, they will believe. And that goes for the entire ministry of Christ. Think about that.

[22 : 55] Those 24,000 that reject him and he's left with just the 12 again. Well, why was it once again, we can ask that when Peter stood up and preached the gospel, calling them out on breaking God's law and their need for Christ, the Messiah who they crucified, just as offensive of a message, 3,000 believe.

It's because Christ had plowed the way. He had preached this gospel. They had heard it and they rejected him for a time. But in his resurrection power, with the Holy Spirit poured out on the church and spilling over, the Spirit brings them now.

So that ministry might be that long, slow, long-suffering ministry. That's what we're called to. And in God's time, he will draw each one for his glory.

So the ministry of Jesus was not seeking popularity. Instead, it was lowly. And in fact, it was fulfilling what God required. Psalm 69, verse 8, tells that this, it says, I have come, I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

So the Messiah would be considered an alien, a stranger to his own family. That was part of him fulfilling what God prophesied. Verse 6, Jesus said to them, my time has not yet come.

[24 : 11] Jesus knew, there will be a time when I come with the host of angel army and all will bow the knee and profess faith in me and my kingdom.

But right now, look at verse 7, the world hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. Sometimes John will simply say Jesus was teaching them.

Well, what was he teaching them? According to Christ himself, he was teaching them that their works were evil. Worldliness is odd. It should not be normal to you. Repent and be baptized. That's what Jesus and John the baptizer were proclaiming. And that's what we will do if we are in Christ. We preach the truth. We do it in love. And that's the most loving thing is to proclaim the truth of God to those we love, offensive as it might be.

I think this is really wonderfully illustrated with a scene from Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. I'm going to read this little scene in a poetic version of that.

[25 : 14] The context here is that Christian and his friend Faithful, who are saved out of the city of destruction, they're traveling to the heavenly city. And as they travel, one of the stops is in the world.

And the world is called Vanity Fair. They're in the middle of it. And they say, we left the city of destruction because it's bringing on the judgment of God. Its works are evil.

It deserves the wrath of God. And with shouts, threats, and insults, the crowd interrupted. Volcanic and fiery, their hatred erupted. So they locked heavy chains around the pilgrim's hands, neck, and feet.

And their cage was hung up on a popular street so that bypassing townsfolk could spit and throw dirt or hit them with sticks and inflict on them hurt.

Yet for all the hate and malice the crowds were expressing, the pilgrim's only return to their cruel curses was blessing, here's the part that relates to our verse, reflecting the love of their merciful Savior, which caused some to marvel at their gracious behavior.

[26 : 31] Christ's cross-shaped ministry stays low, does not go after man's glory and popularity for the self, but instead a Christ-like ministry stays bold, stands against evil, and seeks only the glory of God.

Number four, our King's cross-shaped ministry speaks truth for God's glory. Jesus revealed God's glory from the cross. The cross preached this message, God is holy.

If you wonder how God feels about sin, look at the cross. If you wonder if God is truly just against such injustice, look at the cross. And if you wonder if Christ truly is love.

If God is most loving, look at the cross. And His ministry is shaped by that same mission. Our Lord Jesus teaches God's truth, who God truly is.

He unveils the Father for the glory of God alone. Look at verse 10. This is really the climax of this whole passage. Verse 10, After His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He also went up, not publicly, but in privately.

[27 : 49] The Jews were looking for Him at the feast. You see the irony that John is setting up here? The purpose of the feast is to look ahead to the coming Messiah.

And here they are, missing out on all the rich typology, all the rich imagery, this picture lesson in front of them and this feast that God ordained, every element pointing to Christ. And yet, with Christ not even being there, they're mumbling, murmuring about Him.

confused, you know, talking bad about how He healed on the Sabbath. And this feast was also called the Feast of Nations. Because when God gave the promise to Abraham, it's through your seed that all nations will be blessed.

Abraham continued sojourning toward the promised land that God would give him. The people of Israel were simply continuing that pattern. God promised us rest. He promises to dwell with us and to give us a kingdom.

And here comes Christ dwelling in their midst. For them first, through them to all the nations. The Feast of the Nations was with them.

[29 : 00] Look at verse 11. They were saying, where is He? Verse 12. There was much muttering about Him among the people. Some said, He's a good man. Others said, no, He's leading us astray. But verse 13, for fear of the Jews, no one spoke openly about Him.

The Jews were already planning to kill Him. So Christ could not come in the popularity and the attention of the crowd at that time. But look at verse 14. Here's the climax. I told you this feast started on the Sabbath and it ended on a Sabbath.

And I told you how Jerusalem was the capital. Up on a hill, it's the hub for the entire kingdom. And at the center of Jerusalem is the temple. The temple represents where God will meet sinners, where He will pardon sin and bring in His kingdom.

Verse 14, about the middle, once again, at the center of this feast, Jesus went up into the temple. He is the exact midpoint.

It's the middle of the day, the center of the feast, the heart of the temple, the soul of the nation. And what did Jesus do? Was it another great sign, another great miracle like His family wanted Him to do?

[30 : 12] Would this now be the moment they were waiting for a political coup d'etat? We can take over the government. What did Jesus do in verse 14? He began teaching.

See how His ministry is shaped by His cross? He is here to speak the truth through His word to reveal God. Jesus Christ was an open-air preacher.

He got up where there's a crowd and He preached the gospel for the glory of God. Charles Spurgeon said, no defense is needed for preaching out of doors, but it would need very potent argument that a man has done his duty if he is never proclaimed outside of his meeting house. So that should be our desire. We need to take Christ to all, wherever He can, wherever there's an ear to listen, and proclaim for the glory of God the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 15. The Jews, therefore, marveled, saying, how is it that this man has learning when he has never studied? He's never been through our seminaries.

[31 : 21] He's never been through everything that we set up as all the hoops you would have to jump through to basically be like a double PhD in theology, and yet, he's describing God from the word of God in a way that no one can deny this is the authority of God being spoken here.

The Judean elite was thinking they were religious, but they were really still part of the world, and Christ exposed their evil works. It was His ministry and His life and His message that showed them the shallowness of their entire religious system.

It was futile. What authority does Christ attach His message to? Look at verse 16. My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me.

See, there is no power in ministry unless it's the word of God. It's the word of God going out through the people of God. If anyone's will, Jesus said, is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory. There's verse 18. Isn't that a temptation and a good caution to all of us?

[32 : 38] As you minister the truth of God to loved ones that God brings to your life, so many times you're going to be tempted to give your opinions and to try to persuade using your great intelligence and your winsomeness.

What a temptation it is. Christ says, you have no authority and if you're trying to rely on your own authority, there's no power in it and you're seeking your own glory instead of the glory of God.

So when you get to those moments with your friends, with loved ones, when in doubt, make your words less and less and just give them a verse, a Bible verse and pray.

Send the verse, trust that the Spirit will minister to them through that word. Cross-shaped ministry claims no authority of your own. Those who Christ uses are those who do not seek their own glory. Only the ministry of God's word which carries God's authority is the type of ministry that pleases God, that brings Him glory. And that's what a cross-shaped ministry is marked by.

[33 : 46] Jesus said, I will bless all nations through your seed, Abraham. Your seed singularly, as Paul writes in Galatians. So it's not all ethnic Jews.

It is the one Jew, the marked out Messiah, the God-man, Jesus Christ, through Israel, through the people of God under the Old Covenant, to all the nations, all the peoples, tribes, and tongues under heaven, through Christ, can now enjoy that same communion, that same fellowship with God.

And God is glorified. Well, number five is that Jesus teaches both law and gospel. That's what the cross exposed as well.

The law of God requires that sin be punished. And also, because of the work of Christ on the cross, the gospel now can go forth to all. No matter what sin a person has committed, there is the free offer of the gospel to you.

Repent. Turn to Christ, and He will save you. Look at verse 19. Jesus says, Has not Moses given you the law, yet none of you keeps the law?

[34 : 59] The Pharisees believed that if they were to obey the law of God perfectly for one day, if they could force everyone in the whole nation to do the same, they would then bring the Messiah back. Jesus points out to them, The way you're trying to get the kingdom of God on earth, the way

you're trying to usher in the Messiah, is never going to get there.

It's never going to get there. None of you keeps the law. In fact, by trying to keep the law by your own strength, you're sinning. You're proud, and you're refusing to repent and declare your need for a Savior to come and save you instead.

See, Jesus, He said, Until you realize how blind you are by your sin, you will never be able to see how I am fulfilling everything this feast is meant to preach.

The Sabbath points to the rest of, that only my kingdom can bring. In the age to come, those who belong to me and my kingdom will have true rest. You will never see that the circumcision that Moses and the fathers gave you is served a purpose which was to mark out the Messiah.

But now I've promised, even in the Old Testament, you need to be circumcised in your heart. That's really the purpose of circumcision. And you need to use right judgment because I made a man's entire body well.

[36 : 19] I am ushering in the kingdom that makes everything whole, set back in its place, but you don't see it. Jesus was unveiling to them the I am's.

We've seen these and now it comes like an avalanche. It starts slow. Be ready for what Christ will reveal. He is showing them by His actions and very soon by even more of His words, I am the one who ushers in the kingdom of heaven.

I am the true temple of God. I am that meeting place between you, sinful men who can't keep His law and the holy God. I am the living water.

I am the light of the world. I am the feast of the nations. I am the king of kings. But in this coming, it's in the shape of a cross.

It's the king taking on His cross. So the cross is still a matter of shame and confusion today to those who don't have the Christ, who don't have the Holy Spirit bringing light to the heart.

[37 : 32] And it was just as much that in the first century and in the early church, Paul wrote to the church in Romans, in Rome, to the Romans in chapter 1, verse 16. He said, I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God.

You might be wondering, what does that look like today? 2023, right here where I live. I want to give you an encouragement of what this looks like even today.

The modern world, not just here, anywhere in the world. In 1980, a Christian in the country of Rwanda in Africa, he was forced by his tribe to either renounce Christ or face certain death.

He refused to renounce Christ and he was killed on the spot. When the church went in and cleaned up his apartment afterwards, they found a note that they believe he wrote maybe the night before and it had this little poem written by his handwriting and he entitled it The Fellowship of the Unashamed.

I want to read this to you as an encouragement. This is what it sounds like when a true disciple of Christ has more and more of the love for Christ and lives out or at least desires to live out a cross-shaped ministry.

[38 : 57] Here's what our brother in Rwanda wrote. I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made.

I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. There needs to come a point in your life where you know that as well. Am I or not?

He wrote, I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. This is maybe the biggest hindrance for all of us.

What comes next? My past is redeemed. If you're in Christ, that's true for you. My present makes sense and my future is secure.

I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals.

[40 : 01] I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotion, plaudits, or popularity. Don't you just see that cross-shaped ministry coming through this believer?

I now live in peace, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My pace is set, my gate is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, deterred, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go until heaven returns, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes.

[41 : 16] And when He comes to get His own, He will have no problem recognizing me, my colors will be clear. Father, let's pray.

Lord Jesus, make us faithful disciples. We are not that by our own power, but You are powerful on our behalf.

Lord, please help us to behold Christ in His cross-shaped ministry. And as we behold You, as You've revealed Yourself in Your Word, we proclaim like the song, Christ exalted is our song, the sovereign over everything.

He left His glorious throne beyond and stepped into our suffering. Those same hands that shaped the heaven's frame reached to heal a leper just like each one of us.

Lord, thank You for how in Your meekness You came to lead us like a shepherd. We praise You for Your cross-shaped ministry, O Lord.

[42 : 40] Shape us to be like Christ. For Your glory we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.