

The Ladder and the Cross

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[0 : 00] Okay. Well, you're all here for the same reason. You're all here today for the same reason. The same reason the big question that we all have about our lives, a question that I often raise at the beginning of certain sermons, that is the question of how do I find the good life?

That quintessential human question, how do I find the good life that I've been looking for? I'm going to answer this question. We need to get our answer to this question. I need to start with a statement. I don't have time to establish, to prove the statement. So if you listen to this and then you're thinking, I don't know if I buy that, feel free to come on up and talk with me after the service and we can look at God's word. But I think this is a statement that the more, that if you put a lot of thought into it, you'll recognize, I think that this is something that God's word teaches and something that is borne out by practical experience.

So this is it. Here's how you find the good life. You must find an unshakable place of security and an unshakable source of glory. To find the good life, you have to find an unshakable place security and an unshakable source of glory. Security and glory. Here's what everybody does.

First, this is the way that you live your life, whether you want to or not, whether you know it or not. This is the way every single one of us lives our lives. First, we have to put together a, first, first what we do is we assemble a fortress. We build a, and you spend your, from, from childhood, you assemble a fortress for security. You guard, you build these high walls around yourself to guard yourself. You provision yourself with supplies. You man the fortress with trusted people. Sometimes we, you adopt these coping mechanisms in your childhood that you carry throughout, with you throughout the rest of your life, these security walls on your fortress. Second, you put together a ladder. You scale a ladder to glory. You put rungs on that ladder and step up on those rungs with the hope that you can reach the top where you can find glory, honor, identity, fulfillment, joy. So you've built a, you have a security fortress, you have a glory ladder.

[2 : 24] Security and glory are the two fundamental basic human needs. Everything else boils down to those. Everything else in your life, all the needs, all the wants and so forth, they boil down to this.

You need security, you need glory, and you genuinely do need them. When you say, I need a glass of water, most of the time that's a security need, right? If I go on a, if I go for a run and come back, I need some water. That's security, right? Without that water, my, my body, the homeostasis of my body, I'm going to lose security. My body is going to, is going to stop working.

Now, if I come to you and instead of saying, I need a glass of water, I say, I need a glass of Perrier water. That's a glory need, right? That's a glory need. If you say, I need people to, I need people to accept me. That's a security need. Because you know that you as an individual don't, you know, you can't keep yourself secure. I need people to accept me. I need to be accepted into a community where I can be safe. If you say, I need people to affirm or admire me, you're voicing a glory need. Sometimes we look for security and glory in the same place like that, in other people. Money can promise both security and glory. Money you often turn to for security or you turn to for glory. That's why so many people run after big bank accounts, fat stacks of cash.

And that's why Jesus so often warns his disciples about the danger of loving money. Sometimes we look for security in totally different places than we look for glory.

The essence of sin, the essence of what sin is, is it is that you are seeking your security and your glory in the wrong places. So I want to establish, first of all, you were wired to seek security. You were wired to seek glory. That's who you were made to be. You're supposed to be that way.

[4 : 32] That's not wrong. The problem is where we're going. Where do you seek your security? Where is your fortress? Where is your glory ladder? Because you are a security seeker. You are a glory seeker.

You were designed by God to desire security and glory. But it is possible to turn against God in your security seeking. It is possible to turn against God in your glory seeking. Your efforts to find the security, to find the glory that are going to give you the good life, they may lead you, in fact, to lose out on the good life forever, to be locked out forever.

Let me show you how Jesus faced this exact dilemma in Luke chapter 4 verses 1 to 13. If you have one of the blue Bibles that our ushers hand out, you'll find this on page 859.

Take a look at Luke chapter 4 verses 1 to 13. And we're going to start here. We're going to start in Luke chapter 4. Then we're going to follow a trail to a couple of other events in the life of Jesus. We're going to be sort of starting our journey here. We'll circle around back at some point. But this is sort of the starting place.

We're going to focus particularly on how Jesus seeks glory. So I would love for us to also talk about security, but you can only fit so much into a single sermon. So we're going to actually focus on glory in this sermon. Because glory, or the way we see glory, is often something that we just don't really talk about. At least not in the terms that the Bible does. We're going to focus on how Jesus seeks glory and how he is tempted to seek glory in the wrong way. So Luke chapter 4 verses 1 to 13.

[6 : 19] And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days.

And when they were ended, he was hungry. Understatement of the year. The devil said to him, if you are the son of God, command this stone to become bread. And Jesus answered him, it is written, man shall not live by bread alone. And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said to him, to you, I will give all this authority and their glory.

For it has been delivered to me and I give it to whom I will. If you then will worship me, it will all be yours. And Jesus answered him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, if you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you to guard you and on their hands, they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone. And Jesus answered him, it is said, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time. This is the word of the Lord. And Jesus is tempted three times here by the devil. Look at the first temptation, verses three through four. Verses three to four, Satan is tempting Jesus. What kind of need is Satan getting at? Is this a security need or a glory need? What do you think? Security need, right? You're hungry. You're about to, you're on the verge of starvation.

You need something to eat. You need to ensure your security. You need to get provisions. Maybe at some point in the future, we can talk about that. But we're actually going to spend more time on the second temptation here. Verses five through eight, the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and said to him, to you, I will give all this authority and their glory for it has been delivered to me and I give it to whom I will. If you then will worship me, it will all be yours. And Jesus answered him, it is written, you shall worship the Lord, your God and him only shall you serve. Notice here how Satan baits Jesus, how he baits the trap.

He promises Jesus the authority, the glory of all the kingdoms of the world. He, Satan tells Jesus, all of this can be yours. Think of the awesome power. Think of the power that you'll have at your disposal. Think of all the good things you could do if you ruled all the kingdoms of the world.

[9 : 26] Think how marvelous it would be to reach that pinnacle of human achievement and praise. Think of the glory and all you got to do is just one little thing. If you then will worship me, it'll all be yours.

What the devil is lacking in subtlety here, he's making up for in simplicity. It is so easy. Just bow the knee, hand on heart, pledge your allegiance, and you get everything you ever wanted, Jesus.

Everything you ever wanted. Because the thing is, it isn't wrong for Jesus to want all the kingdoms of the world, this authority and their glory. That's actually the end goal of why he came to earth.

At the end of the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. That's why he came, to receive this kingdom, to receive this glory.

Jesus isn't wrong to desire glory. Jesus isn't even wrong to desire to reign, to rule over the earth. It is how Jesus pursues glory.

That's the problem. The devil is in the details. What if I told you that this is just the beginning of a pattern in which the devil tempts Jesus and tempts his disciples?

[10:46] This is just the first battle in a series of conflicts over the course of the life of Jesus. I'm going to skip the third temptation for now.

We'll come back to it briefly later. But let me read verse 13 because this is really key in Luke. When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The devil didn't leave for good. It wasn't like Jesus won over Satan and now the devil's gone never to come back. That is not the case. Satan intends, he fully intends to come back at an opportune time.

And when he does, his strategy has not changed. His tactics change. But his strategy, his overall strategy never changes in the way that he goes after Jesus.

Satan returns for Jesus and his disciples at least a couple of times over the course of his life that we know of. I'll show you the first time that Satan comes back.

[11:48] And then we'll get to the second time later. So the first time, you can see in Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 8 verses 31 to 38. And here's what we read. Sorry, verses 27 to 38.

Here's what we read. Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am?

And they told him, John the Baptist. And others say Elijah. And others, one of the prophets. And he asked them, but who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, you are the Christ.

And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. Pause here for a moment. The Christ, the Messiah, God's chosen king. The one who is going to bring back the kingdom of David.

The great king of Israel. This is the one who's going to finally restore the glory to Israel. Let me pick it up here. 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.

[13:01] And after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. This is the same Peter who just said, you are the Christ.

Now he's rebuking 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.

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?

To gain the whole world. What did Satan just tempt Jesus with? The whole world and forfeit his soul. For what can a man give in return for his soul?

[14:07] For whoever is ashamed of me and 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.

So we see that Peter recognizes rightly that Jesus is the Christ. He's that chosen king from the line of David. The king that God has promised. And the rest of the gospel of Mark, Peter and his fellow disciples, they're jostling for position.

Trying to get, I want to be Jesus' right and left hand in glory. I want to be the greatest. They want to be right next to this Messiah when he ascends to the throne. But then Jesus teaches over and over that he's going to suffer.

He's going to be rejected. He's going to be killed. And then he's going to rise again from the dead. And Peter, Peter gets triggered by this. He takes great offense.

He takes Jesus' side. No, no, no. This is not the pathway to glory. Don't you know anything, Jesus? Peter rebukes Jesus because Peter is a glory seeker too.

[15:16] And to Peter, suffering, rejection, dying do not sound like the pathway to glory. Just like the devil, Peter rejects the way of the cross.

Peter wants Jesus to take a shortcut. A straight upward path to glory. And Jesus sees the fingerprints of Satan all over this plan.

You know why Jesus responds so harshly to Peter? Get behind me, Satan. It's because Peter is so locked into this false pathway to glory.

Because Satan is tempting Jesus to take it too. Here's what Satan and what Peter wanted Jesus to buy into. They wanted Jesus to seek glory in a very specific way.

A way which Jesus calls the things of man. You have in mind the things of man. You know what this way to glory is? It's this. It's a ladder.

[16:22] It's that ladder to glory that I mentioned earlier on in the sermon. And here's how the ladder works. Where you start out, when you're going to climb a ladder, where do you start?

About the bottom. You're down here, right? You're either in a place of shame or a failure or a place where, okay, maybe at best you feel just okay.

On this side of the ladder, it says this is the All Right Ladder Company. So maybe that's where you start. You start out all right. But you've got a need for glory. Where is glory?

Oh, it's at the top of the ladder, of course. So you've got to find a way to get up into that place of glory. So you get that ladder. You climb the rungs of the ladder one by one up to glory.

That's the way that your glory-seeking heart works. Everyone in this room has at least one ladder to glory that you are trying to climb.

[17:27] Some of you have more than one. Life gets really complicated when you've got more than one glory ladder, by the way. Ever tried to climb more than one ladder at once?

Let's talk about what could go wrong here. Let's say you've just got one ladder. Life is simple, right? Let's say you start climbing this ladder. What happens if you start to climb a ladder and then you realize that several rungs are missing?

Well, you're stuck. You're stuck in a place of shame, a place of failure. What happens if you step on one of the rungs and it breaks? What happens to you?

Well, you come tumbling down, lying broken on the ground in shame and failure once again, staring up helplessly, hopelessly at glory.

On a cultural level, let me talk about this on a cultural level first because this influences the way that you and I choose our glory ladders and assemble our glory ladders. A cultural level here in the West, you know what the ladder is?

[18:30] You know what the ladder has been? It's a ladder and the name on the side of the ladder is the American dream. The American dream. You were trained from childhood and taught what the shape of this ladder is like, what the rungs in the ladder are, and you were told, climb this ladder to glory.

Climb this ladder. This is a good life at the top. Here are the rungs of the ladder. A stable home. Graduating from high school.

Getting a college degree. Starting a rewarding career. Buying a car. Getting married. Buying a house. Having children.

Sending your children off to college. Retiring with enough money to sail off into the sunset on a luxury cruise liner. Climb those rungs. One after the other.

And you will live a satisfied and fulfilling life. You've got that life of glory. Glory at the top. Now here's the problem. Every one of those rungs is vulnerable, isn't it?

[19:36] Every one of those rungs can break. And for a lot of people in our culture, those rungs are missing altogether.

For some of you, that very first rung was broken or missing right from the get-go. You didn't grow up in a stable home. For some of you, getting that college degree left you drowning in debt.

That rung failed too. Some of you haven't been able to get married. Or your marriage fell apart. Or you were unable to have children.

Or your children went astray. Went off the rails. Or you couldn't save enough money for retirement. Or as BK mentioned earlier, you've got aging parents to take care of.

Taking care of your aging parents is not part of the American Dream glory ladder. This ladder that we call the American Dream, it is a cruel and unforgiving ladder.

[20:32] And its rungs are rotten and slippery. And often missing. The failure of the American Dream, by the way. I thought about spending more time on this.

But the failure of the American Dream, it is the root of so many of the political and social conflicts in our culture. The glory ladder has failed us.

The glory ladder has failed us. And by the way, some people who make it to the top of their glory ladders, they get all of those things.

You know what we call that? Midlife crisis. You get to the top of your ladder and you find out, where's the glory? Maybe if I abandon that glory ladder, throw away my marriage, buy a sports car.

I'll find another ladder somewhere else. Right? You know what Jesus thinks about this ladder? Jesus tells Peter exactly what he thinks about that glory ladder.

[21 : 36] It comes straight from the devil himself. You've heard of Jacob's ladder? Well, that is Satan's ladder. The ladder that takes you straight up to glory is Satan's ladder.

And it's composed of a lot of good things. Is going to college a bad thing? Is getting married a bad thing? Is having children a bad thing? Is having money for retirement a bad thing? None of those are bad things. They're all good things.

But they're good things that we have taken and we have tried to turn into rungs on a glory ladder that is given to us straight by the devil himself. Here's what this ladder building looks like in your own life.

Each one of us has a personalized ladder. And especially over the last few decades as the American dream ladder has kind of fallen apart. Younger generations have decided you can find your own path in life.

You don't need to follow the American dream. You know, you can find yourself and find your own journey. Make your own glory ladder. Customize it for yourself. Be true to yourself. So you've put that ladder together.

[22 : 42] You've fashioned some rungs for it. Maybe it's modeled perfectly in the American dream ladder. Maybe you've built kind of your own alternative ladder. Maybe your rungs have words written on it like this.

I'm a righteous person. I'm an expert with a lot of knowledge. I have great possessions. I have excellent taste. I'm beautiful.

People think I'm great. I get a lot of likes on social media. My Strava segments are unbeatable. I have the best experiences of pleasure.

I have the best travel experiences. I'm well off. I belong with people of high society.

And if you can achieve, step up onto each one of those rungs, then you can climb your ladder to glory. And here's where things get ugly. Here's where things get really ugly. Because your ladder to glory, it is a massive source of sin and suffering in your life and in the life of all the people you love.

[23 : 51] You do irrational and foolish and destructive actions again and again. Why? Because that's what your glory ladder requires of you. Your glory ladder requires you to do those things.

And you discover to your horror that the person next to you, guess what? They've got their own glory ladder. And to climb their ladder, they might need to take some of the rungs out of yours. Oh no. So guess what? You fight one another for ladder control. The heart of anger in your relationships, the reason there's so much conflict in all your relationships, is because you're saying, you're arguing with one another, you're fighting, and the essence of your fight's boiled down to this. How dare you steal my rungs for your ladder? They're my rungs. Stay away. It's ladder wars. It's the worst reality TV show ever. Some of you, some of you are stuck.

Some of you are stuck. You're stuck at the ground floor at the bottom of your ladders in a place of shame, in a place of failure, and you're full of fear and anxiety that I won't be able to make it to the top.

[25 : 12] Or you're just depressed. You're lying broken at the bottom of your ladder. You just don't care anymore because you know you can't make it to the top. And then again, some of you have made it to the top of your ladders.

Ever tried standing on the top step of a ladder like this? Ever tried standing up here? What's that like? It's scary, isn't it?

Ooh. Why is it scary? It's unstable. I might fall off. Yeah, it's shaky and unstable up there, right? You're full of fear. You know, it's supposed to be glorious up there, but you get up there and you find that, well, okay, kind of, yeah, but boy.

You're full of fear and anxiety because you're afraid you're going to fall from your height. And boy, the fall from up there hurts a lot more, doesn't it? You fall into the depths of shame and failure broken on the ground.

Or you get up on top of the ladder, and maybe it doesn't feel unstable, but all of a sudden you get up there and you realize, this isn't as good as I thought it was.

[26 : 18] Where's the glory? I mean, it's okay. It's better. But you're depressed because you've worked so hard. You got to the top and you discover that you are still far short of the glory that you are seeking.

You fell short of the glory of God. And you're left without hope. Glory, you're up on top of this ladder. You thought you were going to be closer to glory, but glory is still 100 million miles higher up in the sky.

Satan's ladder here, this is a source of unbelievable ruin in your life. Assembling this ladder, climbing this ladder is exhausting.

It leads to destruction in your life. It destroys your relationships with other people. It destroys your marriage. It destroys your relationships with your children, with your friends, at work, in your church. Your glory seeking is an absolute rat race, is it not?

How much energy do you pour into this ladder? And worse yet, we've already seen, worst of all, we've already seen what Jesus thinks of this ladder.

[27 : 25] Jesus hates this ladder. It is not pleasing to God at all. Some of you are climbing this ladder because you think, oh, if I do these good things, then I get to the top, and God is pleased with my life.

I've, I've reached the glory of God. No! The exact opposite. It is not pleasing to God at all. God hates your ladder. God would do anything to free you from slavery to this ladder.

He would send his own son to die, to set you free from Satan's ladder. Jesus died to show you there is a better way to glory.

You are a glory seeker. You're supposed to be a glory seeker, and this is not the way. There is a better way. Look again at Mark chapter 8, verses 34 and 35.

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.

[28 : 34] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. Now notice the shape of the life that Jesus is calling you and me to.

It is the same shape as his own life. You start out with your life, right here, at the beginning of this J shape.

This J shape or maybe this fish hook shape if you're into fishing. Then you take up your cross. You take up this instrument of shame and destruction, the shame and death.

You lose your life. And then you find that when you do that, your life is saved in the end. The journey of discipleship follows a path.

This idea is not unique to me. First of all, it's all over the Bible. But this idea of calling this a J curve and putting this up, I got this from author Paul Miller, and he talks a lot about this.

[29 : 37] This is the shape that you should expect if you're a disciple of Jesus Christ. If you're a disciple of Jesus Christ, your life will take this shape. It's a journey from life down into shame and death.

Then God raises you back up to greater glory and resurrection life. That is the shape you should expect if you're a disciple of Jesus Christ. That is the shape of a life lived not for a ladder, but lived for the cross.

Because down here, that's where the cross is. And that means if the way to glory for a disciple really is by taking up your cross, that means to get to glory, you got to go down here first. And if you're down here where the cross is, from the outside, it may look like you're farther from glory than you ever were before, but the truth is you're closer than you ever were before.

You're closer to glory than you ever were before. Here's how this J curve plays out. And this is the second time, second very clear time where Jesus encounters Satan following his temptations.

This takes place in Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22 in verses 3 and 4, here's what we learn. Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the 12.

[30 : 53] He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. So Satan's involved here.

He's back. And he's got a plan. When Judas does betray Jesus, when Judas does betray Jesus, Jesus speaks to those same chief priests and officers in verse 53.

And here's what he says. When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me, but this is your hour and the power of darkness. This is your hour and the power of darkness.

This is Satan's hour. Satan was actively working to ensure that Jesus was betrayed and that Jesus was brought to the cross. And that might seem strange.

Wasn't Satan earlier trying to keep Jesus away from the cross? He was trying to tempt him to take that straight shortcut up the ladder to glory.

[31 : 54] I think what's happening here is this. Satan is calling Jesus bluff. He's going to throw Jesus into the most horrific, most miserable trial that he's ever faced.

Satan wants Jesus to confront all the shame and suffering and misery and death. He wants to pound the life out of him. And he wants Jesus to fold like a cheap suit. He wants Jesus to be down at the very bottom of that J curve.

And he wants Jesus to say, I need a ladder out. I need to get myself out of this misery. I need a glory ladder. Here's what happens in verses 39 through 46.

Here's what Jesus does. He came out and went as was his custom to the Mount of Olives. And the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place, he said to them, pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed saying, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.

[33 : 02] Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him and being in agony. He prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said to them, Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

So here in Gethsemane, Jesus is descending into shame and misery and death. Twice he tells his disciples that they are all being tempted.

Jesus in Gethsemane is down here. And he's saying to his disciples, You're down here too with me. And Jesus prays a very raw, very honest prayer, right?

Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. And Jesus' human nature and his frail humanity, he doesn't want to face the cross. I mean, who wants to suffer? Raise your hand.

[34 : 10] Okay, nobody. All right? Neither do I. Neither did Jesus. In your frail human nature, when you are down here, a glory ladder is looking very appealing right now.

Right? It looks like Satan has Jesus on the ropes here. But Jesus prays, and it's the second part of the prayer, that it is what makes Jesus the perfect son of God, the sinless son of God.

Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. The beauty of this prayer is the raw honesty that I don't want to be here. I don't want to be down here. This genuinely is shame.

I'm not going to sugarcoat it like things are okay. Things are horrible right now. But not my will, but yours be done. And he is praying in agony to the point of sweating blood.

He is praying, he is in such absolute misery, the reason the angel shows up is not to say, oh, it's all better, Jesus. Pat on the shoulder. Things are going to be okay.

[35 : 17] They're not going to be okay. The angel is strengthening him because Jesus is going to break down. Jesus is going, he is not going to survive Gethsemane unless an angel comes and strengthens him because he is going to descend even further.

He is descending into death. He is horrified as he contemplates the cross from up close. But Jesus is moving not to get out of here, not to build a ladder out.

He is embracing that downward path. He is embracing the cross his father has prepared for him.

Jesus is descending into the bottom of that J curve.

Jesus tells his disciples that they too are there with him. They too are about to enter into temptation.

The temptation to abandon this pathway of a disciple.

That's why Jesus tells Peter in verse 31, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

[36 : 22] Satan demanded to have you that he may sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. There's a J curve shaped to that too. Right? Satan is going to sift you like wheat.

He's going to shake you hard to see if you make it. But I have prayed that your faith may not fail.

And when you have turned again, when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

And that's what's going to happen. Jesus' disciples are all, you know, they're so exhausted. They can't even stay awake in their misery. And then when the soldiers come and Judas betrays Jesus, they all run away.

They're at the bottom. But when Jesus rises from the grave and he brings new life and resurrection hope to his disciples, he says, Simon, you're going to come back.

[37 : 21] And when you do, you can strengthen your brothers. Jesus approaches his suffering and death with hope. He approaches the suffering of his disciples with hope. He expects that even though Simon Peter is going to deny him, he will not fail forever.

He expects that there is a resurrection life on the other side of the grave. And you see, Jesus expects that the life of all of his disciples, you, you, you, you, you, is going to follow that same shape.

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, then he expects that you too will suffer the death of glory, that you too will suffer as Christ did. If your life has looked like this ladder, just a steady, straight upward journey to glory, something has gone horribly wrong.

That is not the shape of a disciple's life. That is the shape of a disciple's life. Down here, down to the cross, and then back up to resurrection glory.

That's the amazing thing about this, by the way. Jesus, Jesus isn't the only one in the Bible who talks about this.

[38 : 33] His apostles, once you know to look for this shape in the Bible, it's on every page. His apostles hammer home this point. BK read from Philippians chapter 2 where the apostle Paul says, you know, your life, your mindset should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

And then he details the same J shape in Jesus' life. Down from the glory of God into the shame of being a man to the further shame of death by crucifixion up to being exalted at the highest place and given the name above every name.

And by the way, that's your life too. And that's what's going to bring unity into your church when you all start thinking this way. The apostles hammer that home in all of the New Testament.

The prophets did the same in the Old Testament. The pathway to glory is the way of the cross. And that's the amazing thing. The amazing thing is that if you are a disciple of Jesus, you know, and that might sound miserable.

Some people make the Christian life just sound like it's this misery, this drudgery pathway down into sorrow and death and it's awful and horrible. It is, there's another side.

[39 : 45] You don't stay stuck down in death and shame and humiliation forever. Now when you are down there, it looks and feels like you are going to be stuck down there forever. Some of you are there right now.

And doesn't it feel, does it feel like it's ever going to end? It just feels like you're going to be stuck there. Life is never going to get better. This is horrible. You are embracing this J curve because you are trusting that I'm going, if it's up to me, I'm down here forever, forever and ever and ever.

But God is going to intervene. He is going to raise me up to glory. That's the incredible irony in scripture. God opposes the proud who climbed the glory ladder.

He knocks them off it, but he gives grace to the humble. Some of you started out with some pride and God opposed it and brought you down. You reach a place of humility, he will raise you up again.

If you try to climb Satan's ladder, God will bring you down in shame. If you embrace the cross, descend into shame and death, God raises you up to glory. And this only works, by the way, this only works if God is trustworthy.

[41 : 04] If God is great, God is good and God is with you. That only works then if he keeps his promises. That was the point of Satan's third temptation, by the way. Remember when Satan challenged Jesus to jump off the temple, quoted some Bible verses about how the angels will keep you safe, Jesus.

You'll be protected if you're the son of God. Just do this. But Jesus saw right through that temptation. You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, he said. Jesus already knew that his father was trustworthy and faithful.

He had all the promises of scripture. He had all the experiences of his own life. He wasn't going to go back and say, well, yeah, but what have you done for me today, God? Have you proven yourself trustworthy today?

He didn't need to test him again. And like Jesus, you can only embrace the cross if you trust that God is going to raise me up. from shame and misery and death.

Some of you are going to see some of that in this present life. Some of you, that full resurrection is not going to be coming until Christ returns.

[42 : 18] But you will get there. This J shape is the shape of your life. And by the way, it isn't limited to just the overall story of your life and the big events of your life.

In Luke 9, verse 23, Luke's account of Jesus' confrontation with Peter, here's what we read in Luke 9, that Jesus challenges his disciples.

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. If anyone would come after me, because that's my journey, shape, the J shape, let him deny himself and take up his cross, how often?

Daily. That means that every single day I'm going to take this journey. Every day. Every day. Every day. Over and over and over again. Every day includes little gospel stories.

Every day includes little stories of you embracing in little small ways shame and death and the pathway of obedience to God and of you trusting that God is going to give you new life on the other side.

[43 : 32] I don't have to give myself a little glory boost today. I don't have to give myself a little glory boost today. Some of the rungs on our glory ladders are just these little things we do throughout the day to try to make our lives better.

That's how pornography and drugs and alcohol by the way work. It's a little glory ladder thing. I'm going to make my life just feel so much better for just a moment. Just a little bit.

You descend down daily every day trusting that God is going to give you new life on the other side. Even in the little decisions you learn to embrace the cross and throw away the ladder. That's the micro scale.

Let's zoom way out. Zoom out to the whole sweep of God's history of redemption. You see the story that God is telling. BK talked about that a lot last week.

The mystery of Christ. The big story of redemption God is working in the world. Your story is only just the tiny part. One little tiny thread in that by the way. Which is why sometimes your life may not make sense. Because it's part of a larger tapestry.

[44 : 36] You see the entire story of redemption is a J curve. Creation. The fall into sin. Jesus brings redemption.

Consummation. Christ returns. Sets all things right. New heavens and new earth. Glory. That is the shape of all of history. That is the shape of Jesus' life in your life. And that is the shape of every single day of your life.

This is your life if you were a disciple of Jesus. And so if you're down here you're probably thinking something is horribly wrong with my life. Actually something is absolutely your life is on the right track.

If you are going down and embracing it. In hope. Not, you're not embracing it because you're just like you just love pain and stuff. Nobody does. But you're embracing it because you have hope. That things genuinely are terrible. I'm not going to pretend like they're not. I'm not going to talk to God like everything's okay. I'm not going to talk to other people like everything's okay. I embrace this but I also fully embrace and look forward and hope I'm waiting on the Lord to exalt me.

[45 : 45] To bring glory. So, let's talk about your life today. How are you pursuing this glory here and now? If you're in a growth group that's a great thing to talk about.

How are you, what does your glory ladder look like? You need to identify first where you've been setting up Satan's ladder. What are the rungs on your ladder? Are there perhaps some good things?

Maybe those rungs are really good things. Things that God actually meant for you to enjoy. But now you have taken them and you're using them as a way to try to bring glory into your life without following Jesus.

Without adopting the pathway of a disciple. Glory apart from Christ. If you're trying to identify your ladder and its rungs, there's a lot of good questions to ask yourself. When do you act in irrational ways that don't make sense to you and don't make sense to the people that you love?

Sometimes those are security things, but sometimes they're glory things. What do I want so badly that I will lie, cheat, and manipulate to get it?

[46 : 50] What makes me angry? What makes me anxious? What makes me fearful? What makes me despairing? What makes me depressed? What makes me impulsive?

Are there things I see in other people and I'm like, ha, glad I'm not like that. Maybe the rungs in your glory ladder is not being like that person.

I'm going to be better. The answers to questions like that, they reveal the emotions in your heart, the feelings that you get, the little things that you tell yourself, they reveal that you are seeking either security or glory apart from Jesus Christ.

And once you've identified your ladder and its rungs, it is time to let it go. It's time to let go of the ladder. Take the rungs off of it and throw away the ladder.

It is not your way to glory. It is time to embrace the cross. Your way to glory travels through the valley of shame and death.

[47 : 55] Next Sunday evening, by the way, when we're showing that movie, Pilgrim's Progress, guess what shape the main character, Christian, guess what shape his life takes? Over and over and over and the entire course of his life takes this shape.

That's a great movie to come to and to learn about what living as a disciple really looks like. So come on out that night if you want to learn more about this shape of a disciple's life, about the true pathway to glory.

This is a journey of joy, by the way. It's a journey of joy. You can rejoice. It doesn't sound like a journey of joy, but you can rejoice because this is the pathway that Jesus walked.

In Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul, he writes about what his source of motivation and joy and life are. And so as I talk about this joy in life, this is how we're going to end a note that this is a pathway to joy.

Why is Paul willing to embrace the cross? Philippians 3, verses 10 and 11, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. I want to be here and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[49 : 15] Paul sees his life tracing the path of Christ's sufferings and death and he is eager about that because this means I get to share his sufferings.

This means his life is tracing the path of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The suffering, shame, and death does not throw you further from glory.

It brings you closer to glory than you ever were before. What honor it is for your life to take the shape of Christ's.

You can rejoice too because now the good things that you thought you needed for your glory, you had all these rungs of the ladder, you had all these things, you wanted to get married and you thought marriage was going to be a pathway up to glory.

I could talk about how marriage used to be a fortress for security, which it isn't very good for. And now we've pressed into service as a pathway, as rungs on a ladder to glory, and it is horrible for that.

[50 : 15] And now you can take that rung off of that ladder and embrace it as a good gift from God because a lot of those rungs are actually really good things that God wants you to enjoy and it's actually liberating to not need them anymore as a ladder to glory.

Philippians chapter 4, Paul writes, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound.

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty in hunger, abundance in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. What are the all things?

Going through times, very hard times, and also embracing the good times. Right?

He is content in letting his life take that J shape. He is content to live the shape of Jesus' life. He knows who he is as a disciple. Paul knows how to go without. Paul knows how to live in a place of shame and death.

[51 : 19] And Paul knows how to abound. He knows how to enjoy the good times and enjoy plenty. Because he's content, because he's thrown away the glory ladder, he can now enjoy those good things without trying to get them to do something they were never made to do.

And you can also rejoice. God's word, the Bible, contains great comfort for Jesus' disciples who are walking this journey. The Bible was written for people whose lives take this shape. If you are not embracing this shape, you will not enjoy the Bible.

It will seem dull to you, dry, boring, uninteresting, even offensive. That might be one reason why you don't enjoy the Bible.

If you embrace this shape of your life, the Bible will come alive. Every page spring with life.

Because it's about the life of Jesus.

And you will see yourself on every page and you will see Jesus on every page. the Psalms are written for people on different parts of the spectrum.

[52 : 32] People who are suffering. So many of the Psalms are Psalms of lament. People who are being honest that they're down there. Who are ashamed, who are hurting.

And it's written for people who are celebrating and joyful and hopeful. Finally, you can rejoice because God is shaping your life to make you resilient and steadfast.

This shape is turning you, reshaping you into a Jesus-shaped person. Into a Jesus-shaped person. That's why we read in James chapter 1, count it all joy.

Count it all joy. My brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

And then he later continues, let the lowly brother, the lowly brother, boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation.

[53 : 44] Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass, its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

The rich man who's gotten to the top of his ladder, he's going to be brought down. Blessed is the rich man the man who remains steadfast under trial, who embraces this, who endures it in hope. For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. That's just it.

Abandon the glory ladder, throw it away, burn it. embrace the cross and you will stand firm in testing.

You will receive the crown of life. Let me pray. you will be able to mo■e this little bit of for it could be■■ you are