

Tolstoy: *It can be put into practice like every virtue enjoined by the law of God. A virtue cannot be practiced in all circumstances without self-sacrifice, privation, suffering, and in extreme cases loss of life itself. But he who esteems life more than fulfilling the will of God is already dead to the only true life.*

G.K. Chesterton: *For if Christianity is true, then the end of our exploring will be joy and goodness and life. But the path leads down the via Dolorosa and up toward Golgotha, as we take up our cross and follow the One who went ahead.*

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- When Jesus calls us to follow Him, where was He going? What did that mean for Him? What does that mean for us?
- Paul reflects on a lesson he learned in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. He learned to delight in things that we do not naturally delight in. When is the last time you delighted when someone insulted or wronged you? How do we learn to delight in such things?
- The cross is the pattern that defines the life to which we are called. What might it look like to have your life defined by your cross? Think about how it looks in your various relationships. Think about what it looks like with those who mistreat you.
- The human way of doing things and God's way of doing things are not just different, they are in conflict with each other. Can you think of examples in your own thinking that demonstrate this truth? How might you manage the world differently?
- In what ways have you attempted to stop evil with evil instead of by being conformed to the image of Christ? How might this have played out in your last conflict?
- How is God's power being made perfect through weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties in your life?

The Cross as a Pattern for Living

Jerry Cisar — June 21, 2015

Text: Matthew 16:21-27

Introduction

A. "Live the Gospel"

B. The Cross as a Pattern for Living

- i. *The cross is the pattern that defines the life to which we are called.*
- ii. *The Gospel calls us to live the way of the cross, and in living that way we are living the Gospel.*
 - a) Philippians 1:27
 - b) Ephesians 4:1

I. Where is Jesus Going? (16:21-23)

A. "From that time on..." (16:21)

- i. *"You are the Christ, Messiah, the Son of the Living God."* (v16)
- ii. Jesus turns His attention from Who He is to what He came to do, and what it would mean to be His disciple.

B. There are some things that Jesus must do.

C. The plan of God for the Messiah was contrary to the way we think.

- i. The human way of doing things and God's way of doing things are not just different, they are in conflict with each other.

- ii. Paul came to see this in his own life. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Dan Allender, Leading with a Limp: *No one is humble by nature.... Humility comes from humiliation, not from the choice to be self-effacing or a strong urge to give others the credit.... This is the terrible secret about leadership and life: we achieve brokenness by falling off our throne.*

II. Where are you to go? (16:24-26)

The cross was not an exception to how God normally works, it is how God normally works!

A. Must deny themselves

- i. Jesus' cross required Him to deny Himself. (Mark 14:33-36)
- ii. Your cross requires you to deny yourself! Your cross is patterned after His.

Daniel Deutschlander: *The essence of the cross in every stage of life and in every changing circumstance is this: Self denial.... Self denial will always be difficult, will always be a struggle. Hence, to undertake such is to take up a heavy, flesh-ripping, backbreaking cross. For what is it that everyone wants by nature? What is it that is at the very heart and core of each one of us? Each wants to save his life and not to lose it. And to fallen man the essence of saving life is not merely the continuance of bodily functions. It is rather that one's own will be done. To do the will of another or to have one's own will denied is to lose life.* (The Theology Of The Cross)

- iii. Your cross is that place where God's power works through means which make no sense to you at all—through your weakness, losses, sufferings.

- a) This *self-denial* is not the self-chosen poverty of the monk or the solitude of the hermit. Like the cross of Jesus, is it the self-denial required to live Matthew 5:39-44.

- b) This is not the self-denial one engages in for personal piety, but rather the denial required to live out Romans 12:16-21.

B. Must take up their cross

- i. This is not your “mission.”
- ii. You and I must take up that which will put us to death in order to do God's will.

C. Must follow Jesus

- i. To take up our cross is to live as Jesus lived, to walk as He walked, to pattern our lives after Him, even to be conformed to His image.
- ii. *Satan can't drive out Satan!* Only Christ can.

Tolstoy *“Satan can never be driven out by Satan. Error can never be corrected by error, and evil cannot be vanquished by evil.”*

- ### D. To follow Jesus we must want to be Jesus' disciple more than to save our own life.