

46. The cost of being a disciple of Jesus

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Many people become so money savvy and greedy, in everything they do, they go by two major principles – “What is in it for me?” and “What is it going to cost me?” As long as they get a lot and only have to dish out a little or nothing, they are happy.

The Bible bellows it, the preachers proclaim it – the gift of God for eternal salvation is absolutely FREE. Even though it is free to us, but it cost our Savior Jesus’ life. However, once we become the followers of Jesus, we must recognize that being a Christian requires a total commitment from us instead of a little bit of donation.

A. WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

Luke 9:18-20 And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” 19 So they answered and said, “John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.” 20 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”

Living under the boots of Roman domination, the Jews longed for their Deliverer – the descendant of David who would lift them out of the mud and set them on top of the world.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Prophecies like this one filled the people’s hearts with dreams of an eternal kingdom on earth with peace and justice. Think of it! No more oppression. No more fear. No more IRS! That would make anyone get excited for a while. During Jesus’ day, Messianic hopes coursed through the tiny nation of Palestine like an electric current. The people of Israel, including the disciples, thought and hoped that Jesus would be that deliverer and conqueror over the Roman Empire.

After Jesus asked them what the others think about Him, He looked square in their eyes and asked their thought about Him, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

Jesus is the Christ – literally, “the anointed One, the Messiah”. And He is God. He is the Savior of the world, the Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

This question must be asked to every human being on this earth. The answer to this question would make a literal heaven and hell difference. If you answer like Peter with all of your heart, then you would have eternal life in heaven, but if you come up with any other answer than that, you will end up in hell by your own choice.

B. ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

Matthew 16:18-20 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

The verse about Jesus building the church on the rock was one of the most misunderstood verses in the whole Bible. The Catholics believe that Peter had complete authority over the church and he was the first pope. Because of the way of the verse was structured in English, many people misunderstood. In the original Greek language, Peter is "Petros" which means a small size rock and the Rock that Jesus was mentioning is "Petra" which means a gigantic boulder size rock. Who would this Rock be? That is Jesus Christ the Son of Living God.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

It is so good to know that we don't have to build a church on our own spiritual foundation which is often nothing more than a pathetic quick sand. But it is Jesus Christ our Lord who builds this church Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita according to His will for His glory. We just happen to be in it and enjoying the ride all the way to heaven. My job as your pastor of this church is to equip the saints, you guys according to Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ

I am a firm believer of the Word of God as you can tell. If I feed the sheep, that is you, with the Word of God, you will be healthy and you will beget healthy sheep which means that you will be able to evangelize the Gospel of Jesus Christ to someone else. That is how it works. It is not me alone running around to bring people to this church, you will bring people to Christ.

For the first time, the word 'church' was mentioned in the Bible here. The church is not a spin off of Judaism, rather it was what Judaism was pointing to from the very beginning.

The gate of Hades is not attacking the church. We are attacking it in spiritual warfare. We may lose a few fights here and there, but we will win the war in the end because of our Lord Jesus. And the devil knows about it. So he is doing everything he can to hurt Christians all around the world.

The traditional concept of this verse is that Peter has the key to the kingdom. It is wrong. That is why in many of our silly jokes about heaven, we hear St. Peter is standing at the pearly gate in heaven. However, the key is available to anyone who believes in Christ.

In v19, we find another non-sense we were taught from some Christian denominations. They claim that we can bind the devil's power with our commands and loose our wealth and health as we please. They are very wrong. This was a very familiar phrase to the Jews, because their rabbis often spoke of "binding and loosing," that is, forbidding or permitting.

Jesus did not say that God would obey what we command on earth, but that we should do on earth whatever God had already willed. The church does not get a man's will done in heaven, rather it obeys God's will on earth.

C. HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION ANNOUNCED

Matthew 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Having declared His identity, Jesus now declared His work. Because the two must go together. The crucifixion was no surprise to Jesus. Did you notice whenever Jesus mentioned the crucifixion, He also mentioned His resurrection? Jesus is the only One who conquered death, no other religious founder was raised up from their death.

One moment Peter was speaking from the inspiration that came from God, and next moment he was speaking for the devil. Born-again Christians don't have to be demon possessed to be used by satan. That's why we need to be on guard all the time, lest we are unwittingly used by the devil.

The disciples' minds were so wrapped up in two verbs – "suffer" and "be killed" that they couldn't remember the third one, "be raised". The whole thing just didn't make sense to them.

D. THE COST OF BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

Luke 9:23-27 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **DAILY**, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. 27 "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."

When the disciples thought it couldn't get worse, Jesus made another comment that was more perplexing than the first.

The closest contemporary word to "disciple" is probably "apprentice." A disciple is more than a student who learns lessons by means of lectures and books. He is one who learns by living and working with his teacher in a daily "hands on" experience. Too many Christians are content to be listeners who gain a lot of spiritual knowledge, but have never put that knowledge into practice. I call them "Pew Potatoes."

In the Roman world, the cross was a symbol of shame, guilt, suffering, and rejection. There could be no more despicable way to die. Crucifixion was not mentioned in polite conversation, and the people would no more think of wearing crosses on their person than we would think of wearing gold or silver electric chairs or lethal injection syringe. By now, some of Jesus' disciples were thinking, "Did we sign up for this? Was that in our disciple's contract?"

Jesus laid down the stern requirements for discipleship, not only to the twelve disciples, but also to us. We must first say, "NO" to ourselves – not necessarily to pleasures or possessions, but to "SELF" – and then take up our cross and follow Christ daily. This means to be identified with Him in surrender, suffering and sacrifice.

It is easy for us to declare that Jesus is the Savior and Lord. I've seen plenty of people who say that exact thing, but their lives reflect anything but Christlike.

As C. S. Lewis wrote in 'Mere Christianity', "The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether."

Understand this, the Bible is not teaching us self-hate. It is not teaching us that we should be miserable and self-loathing people, neither. Rather, it is teaching us to see ourselves as what we truly are – wretched sinners. We already love ourselves. So instead of loving ourselves, deny our carnal desires and love God more than we love our own life. If we will take our life and give it to Him, then He will give us His life in its place. If we lose our life, then we will find it through Him.

So, when we hear people say that they are trying to find themselves, especially during their middle age crisis, what they really need to do is lose themselves. We need to say, "Lord, here is my life." That is not a miserable thing to do. It is the greatest thing we can possibly do. What God will give us in the place of what we give Him is infinitely better. If I have learned nothing else about God in my 30 years as a Christian, I have learned that God's plans are always better than my plans. We don't need to be afraid to commit an unknown future to a known God.

I asked you to underline the word "daily" in v23. Discipleship is a daily discipline. We follow Jesus one step at a time, one day at a time. Those who wish to be Jesus' disciples must die to self-centeredness and self-absorption. And because selfishness doesn't ever seem to die a once-for-all death, we must execute it daily.

Our motive should be to glorify Christ. Anyone who is ashamed of Christ will never take up a cross and follow Him. Many Christians don't want to be identified as born-again Christians in their workplaces or schools, because they are concerned about what others might think. The One you truly should be concerned about is not those people who are fickle, it is God who will be ashamed of your wrong decision.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

It is my earnest desire for all of us that until our last breath we glorify our God and our Savior, so that our Father in heaven would stretch His arms open wide and welcome us when we get to heaven. The last thing we want to do is bring disgrace to His name because of our stupidity and sins. Don't you all agree?

I know that this doesn't fit with the recommendations of today's psychologists and philosophers. They say that we need to love ourselves and pamper ourselves. We've been doing that since the beginning of the human race. That is why the world is continually getting worse.

Psychologists are not the only ones who insist on this selfishness nowadays. Many evangelical Christian churches have joined this stupidity. Their idea of church services is making the congregation feel good about themselves rather than giving them the truth of the Word of God. Not on my watch.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

I like what Dr. Billy Graham said, "Wherever the Word of God is hidden or ignored, there will be certain destruction."

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Following Christ means more than believing Him – it includes obedience.

By believing in Christ, we receive His gift of eternal life. By obeying Him, we become His disciples and are transformed into our daily life.

2) Living obediently means more than accepting the truth – it includes "tasting death."

That is, it includes putting to death our selfish, carnal desires in favor of Christ's will for our lives.

3) Tasting death means more than being unselfish – it includes dying daily.

Pride insists, "I want what I want when I want it!" This goes against what the Lord Jesus teaches us. We must come to Him with humility and unselfishness.