

Title: What have you got to lose?
Text: Matthew 16.21-28
Theme: The path of discipleship
Series: Matthew #85
Prop Stmt. Christ blazed the trail of discipleship. He sets the mark and we keep the pace.

60 seconds – explain the gospel to the person next to you. Then, have them explain the gospel in 60 seconds to you.

Read Text:

I was a senior in college, but I had missed a freshman level class that I had to take in order to graduate. It was a requirement and there was no getting around it. I considered the class by this time to be “beneath” me. There was really nothing that I was going to learn from it and besides I would be surrounded by freshmen. I sat toward the back and made it clear that this was a complete waste of my time. One day the professor said something that I did not agree with. I used the opportunity to correct the professor in front of the class. It would impress these freshmen, I was certain. The professor called me out on it and upbraided me in front of everyone. I argued my case and he cut me off. How unfair, I thought. He was wrong. I was right. Why couldn’t he just admit it? After class I sat in his office and he explained. While I was right in what I said, I was not right in how I addressed it, or in my attitude. I had an opportunity to leverage my place in that class for good, or for bad, and on that day, it was bad.

He was right. I knew what I had to do. The next time the class met, I stood before the class, and confessed my arrogance and disrespect and asked the professor and the students to forgive me. That was very humbling. In fact, it was good and humbling. I also realized why I had to take that class because that was a lesson that I really needed to learn more than anything else.

I. **Definition, Confrontation and Correction** (21-23)

Peter has confessed his faith in Christ and now Christ explains what that means. Confessing faith in Christ is more than getting the answers correct on a doctrinal test. Confessing faith in Christ means to actually follow him on his terms. What kind of a Messiah is this? This is a Messiah who dies for his followers. What kind of people are genuine followers of the Messiah? The kind who die for him.

A. **Jesus defines his Kingship.** (21)

Jesus has just told the disciples what they had hoped they would hear. He confirmed that he indeed was the Messiah, that what he was building was going to last forever and they were included in it. This was the ticket! This meant that their leaving everything to follow him was going to be worth it. They were on the road to glory. So, when Jesus then tells

them that the road to glory led to Jerusalem where he was going to die, they were stunned. They had no category for this. Look at verse 21 and note the phrase “he must.”

Stop and consider this for a minute. Jesus is the Messiah. He is the King. He has authority and power. So, what “must” he do? How does he employ this authority and power? He voluntarily places himself under the will of his Father. He voluntarily places himself under this responsibility to (notice the 4 infinitives) “go to Jerusalem”, “suffer many things”, “be killed”, “and on the third day be raised.” He must! He must! He has to! He is under obligation. He has voluntarily chosen to place this weight upon his shoulders and upon his heart. This is his cross to carry and weight to bear. I’ve entitled this series in Matthew, “Behold, Your King” because that is the theme of this gospel. This is your king. Your king has voluntarily placed on himself the responsibility to go, to suffer and to die in your place. Your king does not ask you to die so that he can live, so that he can be safe, so that his wealth is protected. He lays down his life so that you will live forever, so that you will be safe in heaven, and so that you can share in his glorious riches as your inheritance. That is your king! But, Peter and the disciples did not think of the Messiah in those terms. On one level, I understand why Peter responded this way. This was an entirely new concept to him. No one read the Old Testament and saw that the Messiah was going to suffer and die. Peter, who obviously figured that since he was right about one thing, that he was now the authority on everything stepped in to confront Jesus.

B. Peter against Jesus (22)

Well meaning or not. Misunderstanding or not, Peter, nor anyone is ever, ever in a position to rebuke Christ. And yet, that is exactly what he attempts to do, as if he has the authority to tell Christ what Christ will or will not do. The response of Christ is swift and clear.

C. Jesus against Peter (23)

“*Get behind me Satan.*” This intense, yet measured response is very clear. Anything or anyone that seeks to stand in the way of God’s plan is satanically inspired. Anyone who thinks that he/she knows better than God is not just a fool, but is mimicking Satan, for that is exactly what he believes and convinced Adam and Eve of in the garden. Jesus is right to respond so decisively. The rock that was supposed to be foundational in the formation of the church had just become a stumbling block and had to be removed out of the way. And this gets to the heart of this gospel. Jesus is not like any King that you can imagine. Peter, nor the disciples understand this yet. Peter has wrong thoughts about the kind of king and kingdom that Jesus is and will bring because Peter is not thinking God’s thoughts after him, but is thinking about what will advance his own glory.

This is the end of the first part of the sermon. This confrontation by Peter and reaction by Christ sets up this defining statement that Jesus is about to make. But, before we move on, let me press home a few take-home truths.

Take Home Truths:

1. Just because you understand one thing, does not mean that you understand everything.
2. You do not understand all of God's ways since you do not know (and cannot know) all that God knows. Therefore, you are an idiot if you think that you can sit in judgment of God and correct him.
3. God reveals to you all that you need to know in order to believe and persevere.
4. God's love for you drives his confrontation and correction of you. He is more concerned about your soul than he is your embarrassment.
5. One of the obvious distinctions between Christianity and Islam is this: In Christianity, our leader dies that others may live and calls upon his followers to do the same. In Islam, the leaders kill others that they may live and call upon their followers to do the same.

Jesus now, has to address the bigger issue. His disciples fundamentally do not understand what it means to be a Christ-follower. Here is the sobering truth. If these men could live with Jesus for over two years and still not understand what it means to follow him, do you think that it is possible that some of you do not understand either? Seriously, when I listen to Peter and the disciples, they reflect a view of Christianity that is extremely prevalent in our own country.

What kind of a messiah did they want? What kind of a Jesus do most of us want? We want a Messiah who will cooperate with and promote our dreams, protect our careers, bless our endeavors, wink at our sin, remove all of our struggle and let us live happy, healthy, energetic lives until we are 95 when one night we simply go to sleep and wake up in heaven where we can live forever in a Downton Abbey-like mansion. If that is your dream, your dream is too small because it is all about you. If that is the kind of Jesus that you want, then you do not want the real Jesus. Here is what the real Jesus says about what it means to really follow him.

II. Call and Explanation (24-28)

A. **Following Jesus is costly because it:** (24)

a. Is not automatic – “if”

“If” means that there is a condition. “If” means that you cannot assume that you are a follower of Christ because you like coming to church because everyone is nice to you or you get a good feeling from being here. But, walking into a garage does not make you a car, anymore than walking into a church building causes some kind of mystical and spiritual transformation to take place.

b. Is personal – “if *anyone* would come after me”

Notice the emphasis that Jesus places upon the individual. No one can make this decision for you. I desperately want you to be a follower of Christ, but I cannot believe for you. You, personally, have to understand what your problem is and feel it, and admit it, and own it and despise it. Then you must understand what your solution is (who, rather) and admit it (Christ), and embrace it (Christ) and love him and trust him and submit to him. In order to come after Jesus, he has to come before you.

c. Demands repentance – “*deny himself*”

Give up all of your claims to your rights. Here’s the deal with this. We think we know what is best, and we don’t. That is obvious from Peter, isn’t it? We have dreams and we want Jesus to promise to fulfill our dreams. We try to find ways to get him to cooperate with our dreams. Hold the phone! Do you know why that never works? Do you know why Jesus says, deny yourself. Give up your dreams. Give up your rights to call the shots, to make the rules, and to be in charge? He does this because 1) you are not a king and 2) you dream way too small. Some of you would settle for a bigger car when Jesus wants you to have a bigger heart. Some of you would settle in life for a better job, when Jesus wants you to have a better ministry in the lives of others. Some of you would settle for more money when Jesus wants you to have more joy.

But fundamentally, the biggest reason why we must deny ourselves is because we cannot save ourselves. We cannot rescue ourselves from our sin. We cannot solve the problem when we ourselves ARE the problem. Denying ourselves means that we must stop relying upon our efforts to earn us favor before God, because our efforts do not earn us anything except more condemnation.

d. Demands faith – “*take up his cross*”

Rebels and malcontents were executed on crosses to humiliate them by showing that Rome would not be mocked, and to serve as a warning to all others who were considering rebelling. For Jesus to call his disciples to take up their cross, he was calling them to rebel, but not against God, but to join him in rebelling against this world, knowing that this world will despise those who rebel against it and will seek to kill them. So, for Jesus to ask you to take up your cross, he is asking you to be willing to die for him. So, what is it about Jesus that makes him worthy of this level of commitment? What is it about Jesus that makes him worthy of your ultimate sacrifice?

- Only Jesus can save you from your sin. (because)
- Only Jesus lived a perfect life in your place and
- Only Jesus died a perfect death in your place in which he carried all of your sins and was condemned to die because he was counted as a sinner and bore the wrath of the Father that should have been poured out upon you.
- Only Jesus perfectly satisfied the justice of God.
- Only Jesus was raised again from the dead because the payment for your sin had been paid in full and was accepted.
- Only Jesus ascended into heaven on your behalf and is now before the Father’s throne interceding for his children.

- Only Jesus will return in glory to establish his kingdom where his followers will reign with him forever and ever.

He died that we might live forever and calls us to die knowing that our death is the gateway to glory. When you deny yourself (turn from your sin) and take up your cross (trust in Christ as your Savior and Lord) you become a follower of Christ. That means that you follow Christ, no matter what. It is a life that is started by self-denial and belief and it is a life that is continually marked by self-denial and belief.

e. Demands obedience – “*follow me*”

When you live in a country that is openly hostile to the gospel and threatens to kill you, you realize that everyday could be your last. Believers in Sudan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, N. Korea, and Saudi Arabia live with daily threat of persecution, imprisonment and even death. How do you avoid it, you keep to yourself and do not tell anyone about Christ. Of course, that is not an option, but the continual pressure of persecution is hard to bear and can feel like a dark cloud that continually hangs over the lives of genuine Christians.

They are not the only ones who live in the Shadowlands. Our persecution does not come from open threats of having our throats slit, it comes from the threats of seduction and we suffer in our resisting its lures. Some of the seduction is literally in your face. Some of you young men have friends who have porn on their phones and they want you to look at it. They stick it in your face. Day after day after day, you live in a world that is throwing this in your face. It feels like suffering when you constantly say no, because it is suffering. You suffer the ridicule, the threats, the names, the taunts, the accusations, and the cruelty. You say no, but you also wonder, am I missing out on something? Is there a pleasure that I am not indulging in that is really ok to have? To deny yourself and to rebel against your world and pursue purity feels really lonely, because it is lonely.

Last year, \$170 billion dollars was spent on advertising. \$170 billion spent on telling you that you have to have this, or experience this, or that everyone else is doing this. (Ashley Madison e.g.) How do you live with contentment when you are assaulted through every one of your senses with messages that are designed to cause you to be dissatisfied with what you look like, with what your spouse looks like, with what you have, with your job, with where you live, with your life in general? Your world is making you promises through advertisements that it cannot keep. Your world is constantly lying to you and when you do not believe it, it means that you are resisting it. That is a form of suffering. When you do not do what feels like every other kid in your high school is doing, your self-control, your self-restraint, your following the courage of your convictions is not only a lonely road, but it is often a humiliating road as well. But, that is our road because it is his road.

As our culture hyperventilates in its effort to promote a new movie that attempts to mainstream and celebrate violence against women, it feels rather lonely to be some of the ones who refuse to pretend that this is okay. Sure, I can say that I will not watch something like that for the same reason that I don't drink out of toilets, and I can joke and

say if you want to see 50 shades of grey, go eat some black and white crayons, but the truth is, when everyone else is drinking out of toilets, they want you to think that you are missing out on something. But self-denial for the sake of self-denial is not the goal, and there is certainly no joy in that. Jesus does not call you to live a life of discipline so that you are tough, but he calls you to pursue joy, which means pursuing him. You cannot pursue him and sin at the same time.

B. Following Jesus makes ultimate sense. (25-28)

The call to follow Jesus is not based on the virtues of self-discipline and sacrifice, but on the truth that Jesus is Lord and that he is building the church that cannot be destroyed and a kingdom that will never end. He bids you to come and follow him and now he explains why.

a. Two Statements (25)

- 1) Whoever saves his life will lose it.
- 2) Whoever loses his life for my sake will find.

Following Jesus, while a sacrifice now, is the only logical choice for eternity. You cannot save your life anyway. You cannot stop death. Steve Jobs, founder of the Apple Company died at the age of 56 with a net worth of 10 billion dollars. That means that he could spend \$900,000 per day until he was 86 to sustain his life, but it was not enough. You cannot save your life, so why not follow the only One who can?

b. Two Questions (26)

Jesus presses the issue home with a couple of more questions. What good will it do, what will it profit you, really, if you gain the whole world (which you can't) and lose your soul (which you can)? Why would you pursue something that you could never attain at the risk of losing something that you could never get back? Besides, what shall a man give in return for his soul? What is the answer to that question? The answer is Jesus! He is the only answer to that. If you do not have Jesus, you have nothing for your soul. Do you realize what Jesus is saying here? Your soul (and the souls of others) is worth more than the entire world! (He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose – Jim Elliot)

Be willing to ask yourself tough questions: What am I really living for? What am I hoping in? What is that I want so badly out of life that I am willing to sacrifice for it? What is my image of being successful? You can work 80 hours a week, for what? What will your company do when you retire? They will get someone else. It is stunning to realize how quickly you turn into “What’s his name?” Working for your job and stuff is like driving your car really fast, in the wrong direction. The two questions are designed to expose the utter futility of living for yourself, while the following two statements are to help you see why living for Christ is your only hope.

c. Two more Statements (27-28)

- 1) Jesus is going to return with his angels and will settle all accounts. (27)

That means that following Jesus will not always feel worth it, now, but it will be so worth it then. Do you have the eyes of faith to see that day and live for that day and accept suffering now and resistance now, and persecution now, for that day? He will give you grace this today to hold on for that day. Your perseverance now will be worth it then in ways that you could never imagine.

- 2) There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. (28)

Next week, we will look at one of the most amazing scenes in the life of Christ. It is called the transfiguration. I believe that event is what Jesus was referring to here in v.28.

Take Home Truths:

1. Jesus tells you the cost of following him upfront, while Satan lets you discover the cost of following him, too late.
2. You cannot save what is not yours.
3. Nor can you lose what is rightfully his.
4. You cannot own what you cannot keep.
5. Nor can you lose what God has forever.

Final Question:

What have you got to lose? Seriously, what do you have that you are going to lose? Or, do you think that it is only other people who die and leave everything behind, but not you? Somehow, you will live on and on and on, and will have everything and keep everything, and will be served by everything that you have ever dreamed of?