

Self and the Cross

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Luke chapter 9, focusing on the importance of denying oneself, taking up the cross daily, and following Jesus wholeheartedly. It emphasizes the need to make a choice between self-preservation and surrendering to Christ, highlighting the eternal consequences of gaining the world but losing one's soul. The message challenges believers to examine their commitment to Christ, emphasizing the significance of being unashamed of Jesus in all aspects of life.

Scripture: Luke 9:23, Matthew 16:26, Mark 8:38, Galatians 2:20, Matthew 10:38, Matthew 16:24, Luke 14:27, Matthew 10:33, Romans 6:6, 1 Corinthians 1:18

Topics: "Self-Denial", "Commitment to Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Amen. Welcome to our visitors from overseas who are joining us this evening and we want to get straight into the Word. I know it's a little cool this evening and I trust that we'll be okay as we look at the Word.

So we're in Luke chapter 9. Luke chapter 9 and I'm going to read 18 again and read through 27. So Luke chapter 9 18 through 27 and we're going to speak on 23 through 26. So Luke chapter 9 verse 18.

And it happened as he was alone praying that his disciples joined him and he asked him, saying, Who do the crowd say that I am? And so they answered and said, John the Baptist, but some say Elijah, and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again. And he said to them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered and said, The Christ of God. And he strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised the third day.

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. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and he is himself destroyed or lost?

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.

But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God. So Jesus asks them this question, Who do men say I am? Peter makes the confession that you are the Christ and Jesus in Matthew says that flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. So for the first time Peter has and the others also obviously have a revelation of who Jesus is and as we said last week Jesus now from this high point begins to go down to the cross.

He has been preaching in Galilee and he is now moving across to Judea down to Jerusalem and he'll be spending his last year and a bit down in the Judean area. So this is connected then to his last statement saying that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief prescribes and be killed and raised on the third day. We dealt with that last week.

So he speaks about himself and the path that the Father has chosen for him but now he turns that on his disciples and he's basically saying to them what he's going to be saying many times in many different ways right through to his ascension and that is that the way that he is treated and the path that he had to walk is the path that those who follow him would have to walk also. And so he begins then and he said to them if anyone desires to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. This appears in three of the Gospels.

It is at the heart of the Gospel. Jesus says these things in many different ways over and over in the different Gospels and obviously Paul has the same philosophy. So this is not an isolated statement which we can say well you know we can ignore this and yet the vast majority of Christianity today does indeed ignore not just this verse or these verses because they're all hanging together but the message behind them and as I said this message is part of the whole of the Gospel.

Now before we start we must obviously say that we are not saved by anything that we give up or by any suffering that we endure. We are saved by that which Jesus did for us at the cross of Calvary. But there is still a price to pay in being a follower of Christ and that's where the problem is today is that we have a false gospel, a false message which is being preached and that is that you can just become a Christian.

Just follow Jesus. Everything's going to be great. Everything's going to be easy.

There's going to be no price to pay. There is no suffering. There is no difficulty.

He's going to bless you. He's going to make you rich. He's going to take your troubles away and so just sign the decision card, pray the sinner's prayer and everything is fine.

But that's not what Jesus is saying and as I said Paul says exactly the same thing. And so Jesus says if anyone desires to come after me, in other words you want to be a follower or a disciple of Jesus, notice that he doesn't say if any of you but he says anyone. In other words that is all encompassing the same way as for God so loved the world that whosoever that includes anybody of any time of all time in the same way if anyone not just those living at that time but those who live today.

If anyone wants to follow him, wants to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, let him deny himself. Now we've spoken about this before many times because it appears in the scriptures so many times and so forgive me if I'm repeating myself but I can only repeat what the scriptures repeat. And so he begins by saying if anyone desires to come up to me let him deny himself.

There are three things we need to do. The first is that we must deny ourselves. The word deny is the is the strongest term of disassociation.

Peter denied the Lord Jesus. He swore with an oath. He was vehement.

He was adamant. I do not know the man. I have nothing to do with him.

He is not mine. I am not his. We are not associated in any way.

That's the same word that is used here. In other words when we deny ourselves there are two things that two aspects to it. The first is that we must absolutely disassociate from ourselves.

Now you say well how can how can I do that? The same way as Peter said well I don't know him. I have nothing on him. In the same way if we want to follow Jesus we must distance ourselves of our own desires of our own life.

Because Jesus goes on to say that if you're going to keep your life you're going to lose it. If you're going to lose your life you'll save it. And so the need for us to almost stand outside of ourselves and say no.

The word deny obviously we use that very often today in the sense that a application was denied. They said no. And so we need to say no to ourselves.

And of course this is a problem today. First of all because children are raised to not understand the word no. We think that somehow we'll damage them permanently by saying no.

In fact the contrary is true. Children need to learn that there's such a word as no. We don't we don't need to redirect them or to take their attention away.

If no is said then no means no. But because we are raised in a hedonistic society where everything I want and everything anybody else wants is okay. So if you want to do something well it's fine.

Nobody can deny you. And we're picking the fruit of that in our society today as we see the dysfunction that's going on on the streets of LA and in the halls of Washington DC. It all comes from the same problem.

The problem of self-centeredness. And if I want to do it then it's right. And that translates then to a relative understanding of truth.

And so if I said it, it is true. And so it has become common for us to speak about his truth, your truth, my truth. Because everyone is a law unto himself.

Everyone's truth, it may not be truth for anybody else but it's true for him. No, it cannot be true. Truth is truth.

Truth is absolute. And it is the same whether it's for you or for me or for the rich or the poor. Truth is truth.

It doesn't change. And so the idea then of saying no to ourselves. Of saying no to our own desires.

Saying no to our flesh. Saying no to what we want. And saying yes to God.

That's really the point here. And of course if we have to preach this gospel, as I do preach this gospel, very few want to buy into this kind of gospel. Because the gospel we want to hear is one of features, advantages, and benefits.

So if you just come to Jesus, these are the wonderful blessings you'll get. These are all the things that are going to happen. Jesus never preached that gospel.

In fact he says very clearly, the first thing needs to happen, that needs to happen is there's a need for us to deny ourselves. To say no to what we want and to say yes to what God wants. Now this applies, I believe, and all of these four verses apply in two different, at two different levels if you will.

It applies to when we first come to Christ. And it applies to our ongoing walk with Him. And so you cannot come and begin to follow Jesus unless you are willing to turn your back on what you want.

On your desires. On your hopes. On your ambitions.

On the desires of the flesh. And the list goes on and on and on. You cannot come on any other basis.

It's either Him or it's nothing. And here's the problem is that we believe that we can come to Him and I can keep my own baggage. I can keep my bad attitude.

I can keep my addictions. I can keep my sin. I can keep all of these things and I can just begin to follow Jesus.

No, Jesus says you have to leave those things behind. And of course we call it repentance. The scripture calls it repentance.

It's the same idea. Of saying no, I'm not going that way anymore. I'm going to walk in a new direction.

I'm going to follow Jesus. I'm no longer going to follow my own desires. I'm no longer going to follow the devil.

I'm no longer going to follow the world. I'm no longer going to follow flesh. I'm going to follow Jesus.

And so it begins by denying himself. And then he says the second is take up his cross daily. Now the word daily is in italics and some translations meaning that it's not in the original.

That doesn't make any difference. The grammar of the construct of the sentence is that this is an ongoing thing. It's not something you do once when you become a Christian.

It's something you do every day. So let him take up his cross and follow him. Now when we speak about the cross I think that there are two important things.

The first is that it speaks of the cross of Jesus and reminds us of his cross obviously. But then secondly it speaks of each one of us being willing to take up our cross. Now we've said before that the cross here is not what we use in common speech.

We say well you know I have a difficult husband. That's my cross to bear. I have wayward children.

That's my cross to bear. No that's not what he is speaking about here at all. I don't know where that idea comes from that my cross happens to be the thorn in the flesh and you know that analogy may be more

true of the problems that you have to live with and that you have to deal with in your life.

But that's not the cross. The cross in those days meant only one thing. It didn't have, there was no variations.

There was no saying well you know the cross can either be this or it can be that. The cross simply meant death. There was nothing more, nothing less to it than that.

And when you saw a man carrying his cross, notice he's not saying that he needs to be crucified. Although Paul says I am crucified with Christ yet nevertheless I live yet not I. Same idea. But he needs to take up his cross.

He needs to carry his cross. And so when a man carried his cross, remember Jesus did this and he was so weak because of the beatings that he stumbled, he couldn't carry the cross and so Simon was called and Simon carried the cross for him. But when a man carried his cross it simply meant one thing and that was that he was in American language a dead man walking.

He was walking to his death. There was no ifs, buts or maybes. And so he is saying that when we take up our cross it is a statement that we have denied ourself.

We have died to our desire, to our flesh, to our whatever it is, and that we are willing to fully die for Christ. And obviously this has again two aspects. There is a literal aspect in that there are those who are called to be martyrs for the faith.

And there are many Christians in persecuted countries who when they become Christians know that they will ultimately die for the faith. We are not in one of those situations. But it is spiritual for us.

There is a willingness, there needs to be a willingness to die to whatever it is that holds me from serving Him fully. And that's exactly where the problem is, is that our flesh is so very much alive as modern Christians. And so we miss meetings for the slightest excuse.

We get into sin with the least temptation. We neglect to do what we should be doing, just because it's a little bit difficult, a little bit hard. And folks, the bad news is, as we've said many times in the last year, things are going to get harder and harder.

And that's exactly what we're seeing, is that many so-called Christians are falling by the wayside because when they began the journey, it was not with a commitment of saying, I'm willing to die in this process. And so when the going gets hard, people just disappear and they just fall by the wayside. And so there needs to be, when we come to Him, an understanding.

And here's the problem in the way that we preach the gospel today. Because we sell the gospel on its features, advantages and benefits. People come in and they make a commitment, but they don't understand what the commitment is.

When you sign an agreement or a contract to, let's say, to buy a car, you sit down with the accountant or whoever it is, and they explain to you the contract. There's the car. Here are the payments.

You have to pay so much a month, at such and such a date, every month, for such and such a period. At no stage are they going to say to you, there's the keys, you can go. No, you get to understand upfront what the commitment is.

And any agreement needs to be on that basis. Unfortunately, marriage is on the same basis often, is that people get together and they marry and will shack up. But there's no understanding of a commitment.

There's no understanding that there is a price that has to be paid. And part of that price is exactly this, a denying of your own stuff and your own desires, and being willing to serve your spouse, your partner. And so because new Christians are not told what the commitment is, are not told what the price is, when things get difficult, they fall out.

Because this is not what I signed up for. Literally, this is not what I signed up for. But Jesus is saying, you need to understand upfront, that if you're going to follow me, you need to take up your cross.

And there needs to be a willingness to say, I am dead, I will die for my faith. I will die to my own desires. I will die to whatever it is that I need, or that I want, that I might live for Him.

And so the third thing then, He says, is that we need to deny Himself. Secondly, take up His cross. Thirdly, and follow Me.

And follow Me. Now that seems superfluous. That seems to be redundant.

Why is He saying, if anyone desires to come after Me, he must follow Me? I mean, it's a contradiction. No, it isn't. Because that's exactly the problem, is that many people want to follow Him, but they don't want to follow Him.

They want to follow Him when things are easy. They don't want to follow Him when things are hard. They want to follow Him in certain areas, but they won't follow Him in other areas.

No, Jesus says, if you're going to be a disciple, if you're going to be a follower of Me, then you need to literally follow Me every step of the way, even to the cross. And so, that is the heart of Christianity. And I believe that this is the test for many Christians, as to whether they are indeed truly born again.

Because if it's all about Me and I and Myself, and what I want out of the deal, well then, there's a question. Are you indeed born again? Because you've taken the positive stuff out of the deal, but you're not willing to pay the price. You're not willing to make the commitment that is required.

And clearly, Jesus is not saying here that, don't worry about it, you know, the blood on the cross, that'll cover everything. You just come and go, and if you want to follow Me, you follow Me. If you don't want to, then it doesn't matter.

If you don't want to take up your cross, it doesn't really matter. No, it does. And if we want to be His disciples, there needs to be this willingness and this commitment.

And then verse 24, because. And I want you to notice that every one of these sentences, the first one begins, then. In other words, after He had revealed who He was, then.

Then the next one, for, because. And the next verse, for, because. And then the last verse in the section, for, because.

So all three of those verses are connected. Because of the one, the next thing happens. Alright, so, where are we? Verse 24.

Whoever desires to save his life, will lose it. But whoever loses his life for My sake, will save it. Now, folk, again, this is not a, this is not a, a if statement, or a maybe statement.

This is a, just a plain statement. If you desire to save your life, in other words, if you want to have your own life, your own identity, your own sin, your own agenda, your own way of living, you will lose your life. And obviously, he's talking about now and then, in this life and in eternity.

There may be an aspect in which it applies to this life as well. But primarily, I think he's speaking about eternity. And so, there is no way that you can have your cake and eat it.

It's as simple as that. There is no way that you can have your life, your way, and have eternal life. That's what Jesus is saying.

It's, it's, it's really as, as simple as that. He illustrates it in Matthew by saying that if you have a seed, and you're not willing to take that seed and put it in the ground, in other words, bury it so that it can die, the seed will remain alone. In other words, you'll have one seed.

And, and I was thinking about that during the night, and I, and I realized that, in fact, it's, it's not, it's not quite accurate when it says the seed remains alone. It's not quite accurate. Because what happens to that seed? The viability of that seed reduces every day that it is not put in the ground.

And eventually, it is dead, and it will not germinate, and it will not grow. And so, not only by saying, well, I have the seed, and I, I'm not going to put it in the ground, I want to keep it. You're not only going to not have anything more than that one seed, but you will lose that one seed also.

But when the seed is taken and is put into the ground, and it is buried, and it dies, it germinates, and it produces many more seeds. And that's the same principle that he is illustrating here, that there is no way you can have eternal life. It's as simple as this.

And I know the problem, because we, we, we've been so brainwashed by this idea that we are justified by faith, and, and so it's nothing of, it's not of works. No, it is not of works. But at the same time, if I believe there must be fruit, there must be results.

And if I believe in the gospel, if I believe on the gospel, one of the things that must result is a willingness to lose my life, to lose my life. And again, as I've said, this may be literal for some, it is spiritual for us. And of course, the problem is, we say, well, you know, I'll die for the gospel.

But when the Lord's asking you to do, to give up ten minutes of your time, it becomes, it asks you to go to the meeting when you're, it's inconvenient. No, I can't do that. But I'll die for the gospel.

No, you won't. And the noise reminds me of the churches that are saying, well, you know, we'll die for the gospel, but they won't have their meetings outside. Some of them are not having meetings at all, and others are breaking the law by having meetings inside.

But they're not willing to put their faith into practice. They'll preach on this verse, but they won't live it. They won't do it.

God help us that we have a, that we don't have a disconnect between, between what we believe and, and how we live. We have the same problem in marriage. People, you know, when, when, when we're young and in love, you know, we, we make all sorts of promises.

You know, I'll, I'll give you the sun and moon and stars. I'll die for you. I'll, you know, but come and do something practical.

Give up your Friday night with the boys or whatever it is. No, no, no, no. That's, that's too, that's, that's too hard.

So, folk, we need to be careful of these, of these hypothetical things of saying, I will die for you, Lord. I, you know, I, you know, if persecution comes to America, then, you know, I'll, I'll, I'll stand. When in fact, we're not even willing to do the day-to-day things that he's asking us to do.

So whoever desires to save his life will lose it. The only way you can save your life is by willing to lose it. Now, you, you say, because he says, whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

So, are we saving ourselves? Just to get back to the theology thing, because we, we say, well, you know, I'm not saved by anything I do. I say, I'm saved by what Jesus did at the cross of Calvary. Yes, that's exactly right.

That's true. But at the same time, he is saying that if you want what I have to offer you, you have to relinquish what you have. You can't keep and have what I have to offer.

The only basis on which we can get the life of Christ is if we're willing to put aside the life of self. And that's exactly where the rubber meets the road. That's exactly where it gets hard.

And there are very, very few Christians today, and I guess probably through the ages, who have been willing to totally lose themselves. Now, I'm not, I'm not talking about entering the ministry, or going to the, on the mission field. I believe that he is talking about the context of us just living our day-to-day lives, and not living our lives for ourselves, but living our lives for him.

Not living our lives, but living his life. And remember, Paul, I quoted that a moment ago, Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. In other words, I'm dead.

Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. You see, you can't have your carnal, fleshly, human life, and have his life.

You can only have one or the other. You can only have his life by willing to die to self. And then he goes on, he says, then the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, or faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

And so, you have to lose, to win. Of course, that's hard to understand, because our worldly concept says, well, how can you win by losing? Only winners win. No, in the kingdom, which is back to front, in fact, the kingdom's not back to front, the world's back to front.

In the kingdom, losers are winners, and winners are losers. Those who will be first, will be last. Those who are last, will be first.

Then he says, these very well-known words, what profit is it to a man, if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed, or lost? Matthew says, or loses his soul. So now, he's using a bookkeeping or accounting analogy, bookkeeping terms. He's using the word profit.

He's using the word gain, as income, and he's using the word lost, as loss, expense. And he says, you need to do the accounts. Now, I guess they don't do that anymore, but when I was at school, one of the few things I actually learned, was that in doing bookkeeping, you have to do a T account.

Anyone come across the idea of a T account? So you do a line, and you have debit and credit, and you draw a line, and you have income and expense, and you add it up, and you come to a bottom line. And he says, now just do the sum, do the math. On the one side, you gain the whole world.

Remember, this is what was offered to Jesus. The devil takes him to a high place, shows him all the kingdoms of the world, and he says, I'll give you all of these. So, on the one side, you have the whole world.

On the other side, you have the expense, the cost, the loss of your life, of your soul. He says, now add it up. What profit is there? And of course, there is no profit.

And then in Matthew, he goes a little bit further, and he says, or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? So, having sold yourself for the world, so you now got the whole world. And of course, for most of us, that's not even a possibility. We sell ourselves for a pot of stew.

Remember Esau. We sell ourselves for less than that. But even if you got the whole world, you say, okay, now I've got the whole world.

I've done the math, and I've figured it out. No, I'm actually lost. How can I fix this? What can I do to get the thing to balance? And of course, the answer is, there is nothing.

Because the only thing that can redeem you is the blood of Christ. And having rejected his blood, and having chosen the world, there is no forgiveness. There is no redemption.

There is no way out. And so, obviously, the question doesn't have an answer. It's one of those questions which the answer is obvious.

And I think that sometimes we need to ask the question, what is it that I'm trying to gain? Is it popularity? Is it acceptance? Is it pleasure? Is it money? And in that process, what am I losing? What am I losing? Folks, we live in desperate times, and churches and leaders are selling their souls for political expediency, for a phone call from the president. They're selling their souls. What profit is there? Even if you get the whole world to acclaim and say, what a wonderful man you are.

But you sold your soul to get there. Folks, the answer is obvious. And yet, somehow, when the serpent deceived Eve, she looked at the price, she looked at the offer, and she made the wrong decision.

When Esau looked at the pot of stew, and he knew the price, he's birthright. He made the wrong decision. And Christians are making the wrong decision today.

I'm seeing it over and over and over. Choosing the pot of stew, choosing the fruit, rather than obedience to the Lord. Having done that, is there a way back? And of course, that's a question I'm not going to deal with this evening.

Then he says, the third one, for, because, 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. Now, I believe that the Holy Spirit, or Luke, writing by the Holy Spirit, is requiring of us to think a little bit. Where

did this idea, this series of thoughts begin? If you want to follow me, you need to deny yourself.

You need to deny yourself. Now, he says, whoever is ashamed of me, what happens when, what happened when Peter was ashamed of Jesus? He denied Jesus. And so, what the Holy Spirit is saying is, you have a choice.

You either deny yourself, or you deny Jesus. And Peter, when he denies Jesus, has a choice. He's either going to deny himself, and say, yes, I'm one of his, and risk losing his life, or he's going to deny Jesus.

And folk, we have the same choice today. It comes down to the same thing. You have to deny one or the other.

You cannot, didn't Jesus say, you can't serve two masters? You can't have your cake and eat it. You can't have it both ways. You can't save your life, or keep your life and save it.

And you cannot not deny yourself, and think you're not going to deny Jesus. In order to not deny Him, in order not to be ashamed of Him, we need to deny ourselves. Who are we going to follow? Who are we going to associate and identify with? Who are we going to deny? That is the question.

And so, he says that, if we are ashamed of me and my words, of Him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory. In other words, if you deny me, I will deny you. That's the way one of the other verses says it.

If you deny me, I'm going to deny you. So here's the thing. Deny yourself.

Identify with Jesus in His death, and He will identify with you in the resurrection. Don't deny yourself. You will deny Him, and He will deny you in the resurrection.

Can you see how it all hangs together? And so it all begins, it all begins at the first step, our willingness to deny ourselves. 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. The other gospel says that I will deny Him before my Father, and before the angels.

Just a slightly different take on these words. Depart from me, I never knew you. Interesting, wasn't that what Peter said? I don't know Him.

Now, I thank God that there was grace for Peter, and that Peter was brought to repentance. And as one writer says that he had a failure of courage, but it wasn't a failure of heart. So his heart was still in the right place, but he just didn't have the guts to take the stand.

But you can see this need for us to be identified with Jesus. Your speech betrays you. Do people hear us to be of Jesus? Our dress betrays us.

Our behavior betrays us. Our values betray us. Either we are His or we are not.

In the good old days when you could still go to the mall, I saw a few times young girls meet up with their friends in the mall. And they would come dressed in a particular way, the way that their parents expected them to dress. And they would disappear in the restroom, and they would come out dressed totally differently.

You see, they didn't want to be identified as conservative, let's just say it that way. They wanted to be identified with their friends. They didn't want to be ashamed of their background, or they were ashamed of their background.

And so the question is, am I ashamed of Him? Am I proclaiming Him, not just in my testimony, my vocal testimony, but am I proclaiming Him in my lifestyle? And folks, here's the problem. We've spoken about this so many times, that Christians profess to be Christians, and yet the way they live, they deny Jesus. They're ashamed of Him.

The way that they act and the way they behave, the way that they drive on the road, denies the Lord Jesus. And Jesus says, if you deny Me, I'm going to deny you. If you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you.

And I thank God for the grace that came to Peter, and that Peter and the others who were ashamed of Jesus on that day, remember they all stood afar off, they all ran away except for John. But soon after the resurrection, each one of them were willing to suffer by being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so my question obviously tonight is, where are we in this process? Are we those who are willing to deny ourselves? Are we those who are willing to literally die for Him? That's why baptism is such, just by the way, that's why baptism is such a significant thing, because many Christians are not willing to be baptized, because it identifies too much with Jesus.

I'm not saying baptism saves us, obviously it doesn't, but it makes a statement, it makes a declaration, and in that, in the baptism we are identified with Him, in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. And so there's a need for us to examine our lives. Are there areas in which we have denied Jesus? Are there areas in our lives that we deny Him even today? Are there areas in which I'm so much alive to self and to my own agenda, my own desires, and I'm dead to Him? Those are questions we have to ask.

And I pray that as we go home and we have the day off tomorrow, that we'll spend a little time doing the math, looking at what I'm selling, in order to gain what? And in the end, am I going to come out at a profit? And obviously there's only one profit, and that is eternal life. There's only one thing to gain, and that's eternal life. Anything else is not worth considering.

What is a man profited if he gained the whole world, and he lose his own soul? Father, we pray that You'd help us. These are hard things to understand, Lord, and the flesh is so much opposed to these very ideas. But Lord, I pray that You'd help us to be like Jesus, who was willing to do the will of the Father no matter the cost.

And Lord, sometimes You're asking us to do small things, and Lord, we're not even willing to do those things, let alone the big things. And so Lord, I pray that You'd help us to be those who are literally carrying our cross every day, being willing to die at any moment, to whatever it is that You want, and what the flesh wants. And so Lord, I pray that You'd help us.

Help us to understand, above all, Lord, write this upon our hearts, Lord, that we may not forget when we get back into life on Monday or tomorrow, and when we're with friends and family or whatever we're doing, Lord, help us to never get away from the cross, to never get away from this concept that I am not living anymore, it's not me anymore, but it is Christ who's living in me. We pray that You would help us in Jesus' name. I pray that You'd go with us now, Lord, keep us and protect us, and bring us together again safely on Thursday.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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