

The Cost of Discipleship

by Anton Bosch

This sermon emphasizes the importance of denying oneself, taking up the cross, and following Jesus. It challenges listeners to be willing to sacrifice their own desires, ambitions, and possessions for the sake of Christ. The message highlights the need to truly understand and live out the sacrificial nature of the cross in everyday life, not just as a historical event.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Galatians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 1:18, John 12:24, Mark 8:34, Philipians 3:7, Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:1, Matthew 10:38

Topics: "Self-Denial", "Sacrificial Living"

Description

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Transcript

Good morning. I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome to members of Sun Valley Community Church, who are again absent here this morning because of the restrictions, because of the virus.

This is now the 11th week that we are dark, and welcome also to those friends from other parts of the country and other parts of the world who are joining us on video. We're certainly hoping that in the next few weeks we will be able to open. There are some interesting developments in the government, and we're waiting for some kind of final decision, hopefully in the next few days, as to the position of churches, and it is our prayer that we may be able to open in the next week or two, but obviously we will keep you updated on that.

So let's start our meeting in prayer. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to meet again in this strange way through the use of electronic media. I pray, Lord, that wherever folk are listening to or watching the video this morning, I pray, Lord, that they may be able to hear your word.

I pray, Lord, that there may not be distractions. We know there are many distractions in the home, children running around, and the temptation to just flick away or just click away and to go to something more interesting, to just go away and do something else. Lord, we just pray that you'll help us to focus and to

hear your word today and to receive that which you have prepared for us.

I pray for myself, Lord, that you'd help me as I preach again to an empty auditorium, that I may be able to present the word in a way that is understandable, above all with the power and the anointing of the Spirit. Lord, we need you. Without you we are nothing, we can do nothing.

And Lord, I pray for your help today, in Jesus' name, amen. I'm going to read from Matthew chapter 16 and verse 24-28. Matthew chapter 16 reading 24-28.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his works.

Assuredly I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. I want to speak with you today about the cross, and yet we understand that that is central to Christianity, and yet it is not really central to Christianity anymore. You will see behind me on the video probably just a part of the cross, which is the sign or the symbol under which I preach.

As a young man I refuse to have any kind of ecclesiastical or church symbols in any of the churches in which I preach. But these days I have the sign of the cross behind me, and we have another equally big one on the other side on the side of the building. This is a clear statement as to where we're at.

We are a Christian church, and we are a church that believes and preaches and tries to live the message of the cross. Most churches today have removed the cross, and that's exactly why I have the cross. Most churches don't have a cross in their chapels or their sanctuaries or their auditoriums anymore.

The vast majority of preachers in America do not preach under the cross, but preach under the American flag. You will not find the American flag in this chapel, because that is not who we represent, and that is not who gives us our authority. We represent the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified and buried and rose again.

He is the one who gives us the authority to speak, and we speak in his name. And so this morning I want to speak to you about the cross, but specifically about the cross in our own personal lives. I'm not going to dwell so much on the cross 2,000 years ago.

While that is absolutely central, and I'm going to give you a few verses that speaks about the centrality of the cross. But before we get to that, I want to just very briefly say that the message of the cross is the opposite of the values that are held by most Christians today. It is antithetical to the message of modern Christianity.

Modern Christianity is about self. Modern Christianity is self-centered, and so the gospel has been redesigned to give the individual what the individual wants and needs, so that the individual may be affirmed, so that the individual may be built up, so that the individual may feel good about himself, that the gospel presents and gives him everything that he or she wants and needs. And in fact this is what Paul warned about in 2nd Timothy chapter 3 in verse 2, because men will be lovers of themselves.

Men will be lovers of themselves, and we live in a time more than ever in the history of the church, in the history of mankind, that men are lovers of themselves. Everything revolves around me, and I, and myself. We don't care about the next man.

Even those who are in churches, those who are Christians, even those who are in the ministry, really care very little about anyone else, except their own ambitions, their own desires, their own needs. And as long as their needs are being met, and as long as they're being affirmed, everything is fine. But in fact the message of the cross goes diametrically opposite to this whole idea of being self-centered, of being loving ourselves.

There's in fact a whole doctrine designed to say that we must love ourselves, and it's a twisting of the Scripture that says that we need to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Now that verse does not say I must love myself so that I can love my neighbor. That is heresy.

The Bible does not speak about us loving ourselves. He is simply stating a fact that we love ourselves. That's our natural default position, is to love ourselves more than anything else.

And what the Scripture is simply saying is love others the same way as you love yourself. It's not saying you must love yourself. And in fact we're going to see what the Scripture says.

In fact I've read the passage from Matthew chapter 16, which we're going to spend some time on today. In 1st Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18, and I want for us to understand that the message of the cross is central to the church. The day you remove the cross, and I'm not speaking about the symbol of the cross in the building, I'm speaking about the cross from the message.

And I'm not meaning that every single message you must make reference to the cross. But if the cross is not the underlying principle that underlies every message that is being preached, if it is not the underlying principle that underlies everything that you believe and everything that you say and do, then it is a false gospel. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18, and I could have quoted many many scriptures, but I'm trying to restrict myself so that we can spend time in the text that I want to elaborate on this morning.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. And of course in this context in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and also part of chapter 2, he is dealing with the issue that the Jews seek a sign and the Greeks seek for wisdom.

But he says we are not giving signs, it's not about signs and wonders, as much as that is true for many churches today. Paul says it's not about the signs and the wonders, it's not about the the wisdom and the knowledge and the intellectual approach which many other churches are also involved in. But he says it's about the message of the cross.

Now there's a whole denomination here in America, and they have worldwide influence, who preach this thing called the message of the cross. And yet they cannot define what they mean by the message of the cross. I'm going to try and define that message for you this morning, particularly as it relates to us.

I do believe that the message of the cross is central to the gospel. I do believe that the message of the cross is central to a victorious Christian life. But it has nothing, and the only reason I'm making reference to this international ministry is because I don't want you to assume that I'm meaning the same thing that they're meaning.

I'm not meaning the same thing they're meaning. What they're meaning is nebulous, it's unclear, I've read their books, I don't know what they mean by the message of the cross. It's simply a mantra.

I trust that today it will become a reality as we examine the scriptures. So the message of the cross is the power of God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, in the same line of thought, I am determined to know nothing, or not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

The crucified Christ, that is the center of the message. And of course the cross behind me is an empty cross. He is no longer on the cross.

We don't believe in crucifixes. The cross is empty, he is risen, and he is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and he's coming soon to take us to be with him. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, a passage which I refer to often because I believe that in this passage we find the cornerstone of our message, the cornerstone of the gospel.

Paul says this is the gospel that you believe, this is the gospel I preached to you, this is the gospel that saved you, and this is the gospel in which you continue to stand. And you'll notice that the gospel has nothing to do with me and I and myself. The gospel has to do with Jesus Christ.

And so he says I deliver to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. You'll see that's the part that we had to play in this whole process, because of our sins. But he died according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Paul says here is a definition, not a this is the definition of the gospel. There is no other definition of the gospel. The gospel is not defined by God has a wonderful plan for your life.

The gospel is not defined by four spiritual laws. The gospel is defined that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, that he rose again on the third day, and that that is according to the scriptures. This is the gospel.

This is the center of everything that we say and do and preach. This is everything the New Testament Church preached and believed. This is what Paul preached.

This is what John and Peter and James and the other apostles taught. And this is the that we need to continue to stand in today. The problem is that many of us believe that Jesus died on the cross.

In fact probably I would imagine 70% 60% of Americans believe that Jesus died on the cross. The problem is that it is not personal, that they don't believe that he died for their and that's an important part of this of this definition that Christ died for our sins. That he died for my sins on the cross of Calvary.

And so while people believe that he died and and while others may believe that he died for their sins, that's as far as it goes. But there is another dimension to the cross and that is really what I want to focus on today. And that is that the cross deals with me and with my flesh.

And so there are two aspects to this. The first is the theological or theoretical aspect. And Paul refers to this in many places in Romans chapter 6 and a number of other passages.

I'm going to just quote for you Galatians chapter 2 verse 20. I've been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God

who loved me and gave himself for me. I have been crucified with Christ.

I've been I'm dead. We in fact saw that verse a different verse last week that speaks about the fact that we have died or was it two weeks ago. I have died to the world and the world is dead to me.

So the theological aspects and I'm going to go through this very very quickly is that when Jesus died on the cross God supernaturally miraculously placed me in Jesus Christ so that when he died I died. So that I would be freed from the law and that I might be raised with him to walk in newness of life. That's the theology.

That is the process of being born again. You can't be born twice but once you've died you can be born again and so that's the problem. Many Christians have claimed to be born again but in fact they never died between their first birth and second birth.

That can't happen. Between the first birth and the second birth there has to be a death in order for you to be to be born again. And so it is more than just the theoretical or theological thing that happened two thousand years ago.

Yes that is cardinal. That is central to the faith. That is absolutely the principle on which the whole of the gospel hangs.

Not just that Christ died but that I died with him that I was buried with him in his death and that I was raised to walk in newness of life. But it goes beyond that. It needs to be more than just a theory.

It needs to be a practical reality and this is where we really have a problem. So if we go back to where I began today, a huge percentage of Americans or Western Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross. They've all seen the crucifixes outside of Roman churches and so on.

But a small percentage of those believe that he actually died for us. An even smaller percentage of those who believe that he died for us believe that they died with him and that this verse in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20 that I've been crucified with Christ, that that is true of themselves. Now I don't know what numbers we're talking about here but we've come from 70% down to a portion of that and from that we've come to a portion of that.

Now we're going to come to the fourth group and the fourth group are those to whom this is a present reality. And the reality is that that is an incredibly small portion of humanity in general and a very, very small portion of the totality of the church. You see many people identify with a cross in different ways, particularly hanging a gold cross around their necks.

And to be quite honest with you, when I see someone wearing a gold cross I'm immediately suspicious, because invariably 99% of the time it's simply an outward expression of something which is missing inside. It is just an attempt to tell people I'm religious so that you can sell more pillows or you can sell more politics or you can sell more whatever it is that you're selling. Look, I'm a Christian, I wear a cross.

Look, it needs to be more than that. It needs to be a present reality in our lives that I have been crucified with Christ and not only that I've been crucified with Christ but that I'm living the crucified life today. You see, there are many aspects of our faith that are both forensic or theological and that are both practical.

We speak about righteousness or justification. Jesus made us righteous at the cross. When we were born again God declares us to be righteous.

But while that is true, it now needs to be translated to a practical reality. I now need to begin to live out that theoretical righteousness in a practical day-to-day lifestyle. Paul deals with us in Ephesians chapter 4 and he speaks about two kinds of unity.

The unity that we have in the Spirit and the unity of the faith. When we are born again we become part of the body of Christ. We're born into and baptized into the body of Christ, the Universal Church.

But now that unity needs to become a practical reality in the local assembly. Obviously we can't practically become one with with Christians in other parts of the world that we don't know, or with other Christians who lived 2,000 years ago. But there needs to be a practical outworking of that theoretical unity in the local assembly as we become truly one.

The same is true of the marriage. When we are married we become one flesh and God regards us in terms of accountability, in terms of forensics, in terms of theology as one. But that theoretical unity now needs to become a practical unity.

And that takes a lifetime as we become more like each other in the marriage. And we become hopefully more like each other. And we become more one so that we begin to speak with one voice.

We begin to think with one mind. We begin to feel with one heart. And so we can go on and on.

And there are many, many other aspects of our faith that has both a theoretical aspect, which is fully true, but now needs to be worked out in a practical way. And the same is true concerning our being crucified with Christ. Yes, we were crucified with him 2,000 years ago.

But now that needs to become real in the way that we live. And this is where we have the problem. This is where the rubber meets the road.

We're quite happy to say, well, I was crucified with Christ. We're quite happy to wear a golden cross. But it's another story, being literally crucified and living a crucified life.

So let's get to the passage I want to deal with. I've taken half of my time to give you the introduction, so let me take the other half and deal with the actual text. Matthew chapter 16 and verse 24.

Matthew chapter 16 verse 24. So Jesus says, if anyone desires to come after me, in other words, if you want to be one of my followers, plain modern English, if you want to be a Christian, there are three things you need to do. You need to deny yourself, you need to take up your cross, number two, and number three, you need to follow him.

I've spoken about this over the years, and it's a concept which people have difficulty receiving, have difficulty understanding, and even more difficulty in applying. But the first thing that he says is that in that process we need to deny ourselves. We need to deny ourselves.

The Greek word here is the same word that is used concerning Peter. And when Peter was in that outer court and Jesus was being tried, they come to him and say, you're one of his people. But Peter denied the Lord Jesus.

He said, I don't know the man. I don't know who he is. I have nothing to do with him.

That is the concept that is used in this word. It is denying any association with, it is denying any familiarity with, it is putting yourself at a total distance to your self. Now that's where it becomes hard, because we are so engrossed in ourselves, we are so, so tied up in ourselves.

My whole life revolves around me and I. This is who I am. And now Jesus says you need to get some distance from yourself. You need to get away from yourself.

And that's where we have the problem. Oh, but Jesus could surely not have meant this. Yes, he certainly meant this, because he amplifies that by the next statement, take up your cross.

See, that's exactly where our problem lies. And every problem in the church, every problem in families, every problem in the marriage, every problem in society comes down to this problem of me wanting my way and being able to do things the way I want to do them. And I do them without consideration of anyone else.

I don't care what anyone else says or does or needs, as long as I'm okay. In fact, there's a whole area of psychology that is calculated and whipped out around this whole concept and a series of books, I'm okay, you're okay, and so on. And it's all about as long as I'm fine with myself.

The heart of psychology is that you need to feel good about yourself. And yet Jesus in his manifesto for his kingdom says the first thing that you need to understand is that you are bankrupt, that you are poor before God, and there needs to be a weeping and a sorrow as you recognize your absolute bankruptcy before God. So there is nothing within us.

Paul says, in my flesh there dwells no good thing. And yet we cling to the flesh, we cling to our pride, we cling to our idiosyncrasies, and we have all sorts of fancy names for them. But at the end of the day, it's just self.

Paul says we need, Jesus says you need to deny yourself, get over yourself, put yourself away, have nothing to do with yourself. Because at the end of the day, the end of the third or the third items, third step here is follow Jesus. No longer following I, no longer following my agenda, no longer following my desires, my lusts, my wants, but following Jesus.

This is the gospel. This is the heart of the gospel. And this is why the gospel is powerless in most Christians lives, because they're not willing to come to this point.

And so yes, they want what the good things that Jesus has to offer, they want the pleasant things of the gospel, they want to go to heaven. But this idea of saying no to myself, this concept of sacrificing self, and I'm not suggesting for one moment, please understand me, I'm not suggesting for one moment that I can earn my salvation by making a sacrifice. I cannot earn, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice in the cross of Calvary.

But the concept of sacrifice is giving something up that is valuable to you. And what is most valuable to us? Myself, my pride, my flesh, my wants, me, I, and myself. That is the most valuable thing I have.

And is Jesus not worthy of the most valuable gift that you can give? Because he gave that which was most valuable for us. He died for us upon the cross of Calvary. The Father so loved us that he gave his only

begotten Son.

And yet we don't want to give him ourselves. Yes, we want him, but we don't want to give us ourselves to him. Let him deny himself.

Let him get away from himself. Let him say no to himself. And of course we've spoken about that in this church many times, often to no avail.

The one word that parents refuse to use in raising their children is the word no. Yeah, we want to redirect them. We want to change their focus.

We want to do this or that or the other thing. But people believe, and modern Christians also believe with all their hearts, that the word no is damaging to the psyche of the child. It is not! It is the core of the gospel, that I say no to myself, that I say no to my flesh, that I say no to sin, that I say no to my worldly ambitions.

And until I learn to say no to myself, and that's the problem, is that the modern generation have never heard the word no. And so when they have to say no to themselves, it is a concept that we cannot come to terms with. And yet until you deny yourself, until you say no to self, you cannot be his disciple.

It's as simple as that. And then the next thing he says is, take up your cross. Now let me just deal with some difficulty here, because we've absorbed this idea of having a cross into our popular culture, and so it's become part of our language.

And we say, well, you know, we all have a cross to bear. In Afrikaans there's a saying that says that every house has a cross. And that cross invariably is a wayward child, a difficult marriage, some kind of physical challenge.

But that's not what Jesus is meaning here at all. That is not our cross. You could call that the thorn in the flesh, your thorn in the flesh, if you will.

That's about as close as you're going to get. But you can never call it your cross. And to say, well, you know, I have a difficult husband, a difficult wife, or I have wayward children, that's the cross I have to bear.

No, that has nothing to do with the cross. The word cross should never be used in that context. The idea here is of taking up, of carrying, of picking up.

Your cross is very clearly connected to the condemned man having to carry his cross to the place of crucifixion. And you remember this happened to Jesus, and he stumbled, and he couldn't carry the cross, and so Simon of Cyrene is pulled out of the crowd and coerced into carrying the cross for the Lord Jesus. But every crucified man those days, and by the way, many people were crucified by the Romans.

It was a terrible form of punishment for their worst enemies. And when you saw a man carrying a cross, you knew, here is a man ready to die. Here is a man on his final march to what we would call the gallows.

But this was far worse than the gallows. And Jesus is saying, if you want to follow me, if you want to be my disciple, if you want to be a Christian, you need to take up your cross. You need to be literally a dead man walking.

We understand that term in American culture, and I think in probably most parts of the world. Dead man walking is the phrase that is used, and not many people are executed anymore in the United States. But

when a man is being executed, is going to his final execution, whatever form that takes, the other prisoners will call out, or the guards will call out, dead man walking.

A man's walking his final steps to his death, and the other prisoners will turn away from him. We need to be dead men walking. We need to carry our cross.

And this concept then means that I am not just dead 2,000 years ago, but that I am willing to die now and today. Now he doesn't call all of us to die. Yes, there are those who are martyrs of the faith, and those are great and wonderful heroes, and there are men and women who are being martyred even today in different parts of this world.

But most of us, and most of those who are listening to this message today, will not be asked to die physically. But you need to be willing to die. And if you're willing to physically die, there needs to be then a willingness to die to everything else that is important in your life, including self, including your desires, your ambitions, your money, your house, your children, your whatever.

Jesus said, don't you remember, if you're not willing to turn away from parents, and from children, and from houses, you're not worthy. And again, we're not saved by doing those things. But if we are truly saved, if the cross has become real, if we understood what has happened at that cross of Calvary, when he, the sinless one, died in my place, when that becomes real, then no sacrifice that he asks of me can become too great, because nothing can compare with the Son, the Son of God, dying in my place upon that cross of Calvary.

There needs to be a real willingness to die. There are so many times in my ministry that people have come to me and said, I want to follow Jesus. Not so long ago, someone came to me and said, I really want to be a Christian.

I really want to follow Jesus. And I had to say to this person, you need to turn your back on your lifestyle. He was not willing or able.

You see, that's the problem with the modern gospel, is you can keep doing whatever you're doing. You can keep your lifestyle. You can keep your sin.

You can keep your adultery. You can keep your pornography, and you can still follow the Lord Jesus. No, you cannot.

There needs to be a willingness to die. The rich young ruler comes to Jesus, and Jesus doesn't say, oh, here's a man who's influential. He'd be a wonderful Christian, and look at all his money.

He can support us, and he can help me to get the message out even further. No, Jesus recognized that that young man needed to die to his money, and he says, go and give it all away. And the young man wasn't willing to take up his cross.

He wasn't willing to die to himself. I remember a story, and I'm not sure how much truth there isn't, but I believe it illustrates the point, and that is of a slave master in the south of America a long time ago, not so long time ago, finding his slaves singing wonderful Negro spirituals, hymns and songs, and always having the joy of the Lord, in spite of their very, very difficult life. And one day the master came to one of the slaves, and he says, tell me, why are you always so happy? And the slave's answer was, because I have Jesus.

And the master said, well, how can I get Jesus? And the slave said, well, you need to get off your horse and come and work here in the field with us. And the master was offended, and he went away. He came again a few weeks later, same story.

What do I need to do to get the joy you have? Well, you need Jesus. How can I get Jesus? You say, what kind of gospel is this? Wait for the end of the story. Get off your horse and work with us here in the field.

No, he says, he goes away, and he's really upset. And then he comes a third time, and he says, what do I need to do? And the slave says to him, master, you need to get off your horse, and you need to join with us here in the field. And the master had thought about it, and he says, okay, I will.

And the slave said, don't worry, you don't have to do it. You just need to be willing to do it. You see, there's the issue.

There's the crux of the matter. He may not ask you to die. He may not ask you to give up your house, or your children, or your possessions, or your hobby, or your whatever it is that's so important to you.

But there needs to be a willingness. There needs to be saying, yes, Lord, it's all yours. And whatever you ask of me, I'm willing to give, even to my life.

And remember those who are part of the church here, and I've spoken about this many times. We'll say, yes, Lord, I'll go to China and preach the gospel there. Yes, Lord, I'll go anywhere, and I'll preach the gospel.

I'll make whatever sacrifice. And yet, when he's asking you to live a Christian life in your own home, then that becomes too difficult. It's easy to agree to some kind of theoretical request that we know is not going to be real.

It's another thing to do, what we've been asked to do here and now. Take up your cross. Now I want you to see what Jesus is saying.

If anyone wants to or desires to come after me, if you want to be a disciple, you want to be a follower, then you need to deny yourself. You cannot have self and Jesus. You cannot have your life.

We're going to see that in a moment. You cannot save your life and have it. You need to be willing to lose that you might gain.

Let me finish with this verse, and then I'm going to move on to the next verse. The third thing he says you need to do is take up his cross and follow me. We need to be followers of Jesus.

Too many people are followers of men. In fact, the vast majority of will identify themselves as Roman. They are followers of Rome.

Or they're Calvinists. They're followers of Calvin. Or they are Lutheran.

They're followers of Luther. Or they're charismatic. They're followers of the charismatic movement.

Jesus says that the true disciples follow him, are followers of Jesus. And I trust that there is no one in this church or no one who's watching this video who is a follower of Anton Bosch. If that is, then you need to repent and turn away immediately.

You cannot be my follower. You can only be a follower of the Lord Jesus. In fact, we cannot, as much as I hold Paul in the highest esteem, we cannot be a follower of Paul.

We must be a follower of Jesus. The problem is that in America today, people are followers of the most amazing things. Never mind following a denomination or a man in the religious realm.

But men have become followers of politicians. People have become followers of movie stars. People have become followers of celebrities who've done nothing and achieved nothing, but somehow been able to get some kind of celebrity status.

These are the people we follow. I remember the word follow here is not the sense in which we use it in on fake book. The word follow here is who are you patterning yourself after? Who are you modeling in your life? Whose example are you taking? I remember over the years seeing preachers and listening to preachers who, when I listened to them, I was absolutely sure I was hearing another preacher because they'd so closely emulated their hero, the man that they were aspiring to be like.

I don't know if I can ever achieve that, but my prayer is that maybe one day, when I finish my work here, I would be recognized as a follower of Jesus and not a follower of any man. Yes, there are men that I hold in high esteem, men who've had a tremendous influence on my own life and ministry, but I can never be their followers. I can only follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are you following today? See, in the context of what Jesus is speaking about here, it's possible that many are not even following. You remember there was a man who came to Jesus and he said, well, I want to be one of your disciples. Jesus said, well, go and just leave everything and come and follow me.

A man says, no, I first need to go and bury my father. I have things to do. Yes, he wanted to be a follower, he wanted to be a disciple, but he didn't want to follow.

He wanted to follow himself. You cannot be a Christian if you're not following Jesus, if you're not following his example. And particularly in this context, it's the example of being sacrificial.

It's the example of denying yourself. It's the example of being willing to take up the cross and to die, if necessary, for someone else. And so the question is very simple.

Are you denying yourself? Have you taken up the cross? And are you following Jesus? Now let's have a look at the next verse, and I'm not going to be that long. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

In John's Gospel, the parallel passage, he speaks about a grain of wheat that unless it falls into the ground, you only have one grain of wheat. It abides alone. But if that grain of wheat is willing to fall into the ground and die, it then grows and it produces many more grains of wheat.

And so you can say, well, you know, I'm all about self-preservation. That's really what it's all about today, self-preservation. You can try and preserve yourself.

Look after yourself. Keep yourself. Be careful not to expend yourself beyond your emotional, financial, and physical abilities.

But at the end of the day, you're going to lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. So again, Jesus is reaffirming exactly the same message.

You cannot be his disciple unless you're willing to lose your life, to lose your identity, to lose who you are, to lose your ambitions, to lose your desires, and to give it all to Jesus. Now the next verse, we love to use this verse in the context of the preaching of the Gospel. But the problem is, yes, it's part of the Gospel, but it's part of that which Christians, or those who claim to be Christians, have never come to terms with for themselves.

What is a man profited if he gained the whole world and loses his own soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul? You've been making compromises in your life. The Lord has asked you to do certain things. He's asked you to give up certain things, and you've not been willing to do that, because those things are so important.

Jesus says, what use is it? What use is it if you keep your friends, if you keep your health, you keep your money, you keep your family, you keep whatever it is that's important to you, and in the process you lose your soul. And you say, well that's not really possible because I'm saved and I'm eternally secure. Don't be so sure.

Over the years I've come across many Christians who've not been willing to make the necessary sacrifices to follow the Lord Jesus wholeheartedly and single-mindedly. And the stuff that had bound them, the things of the world and of the flesh, drew them back into the world. And at the end of the day, if you've given up and sacrificed Jesus for yourself, what are you going to give to redeem yourself again, to buy yourself back again? There is no price.

There was only one price that could be paid, and that was the price of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary, and that was paid once. And if you reject that, then that's gone. You don't have another chance on that.

But that's not really the thrust of my message this morning. I want you to, I want us to come to terms with this question. What is it that the Lord has been asking you to die to? What habit? What thought pattern? What addiction? What possession? What person? What ideology? If you're not willing to die to that, I don't know that you are a disciple.

I don't know that you are a Christian. Oh, I'm justified by faith. Faith without works is dead.

If you truly came to the cross of Jesus Christ, if you truly understood what he did for you at that cross of Calvary, nothing that he's asking of you this morning can be too dear, can be too expensive. Were the whole realm of nature mine that were an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Father, I pray that you would help us. Lord, it's so difficult to give up those things that are important to us, those things that identify us as who we are. So difficult to give up, Lord, those parts of our personality, those things that we surround ourselves with.

Lord, help us to understand the cross. Help us to understand what it cost him, the Holy One, to bear away my sin. Help me to understand the price that Jesus paid to give up his glory and to come down and to live as a man and to take upon himself the sin of the world and to die that shameful death on the cross of Calvary.

Help me understand, Lord, because only in understanding that my own sacrifice becomes nothing and becomes easy. Help us, I pray, in Jesus' name. I pray, Lord, that this message may burn into our hearts.

And Lord, that it may not just be something that we share on Facebook, but Lord, it may be something that changes us and that lives with us until Jesus comes, that everything we say and do will be changed and affected by the cross of Jesus, not just 2,000 years ago, not just on the wall behind the preacher, not just in a golden symbol, but in the reality of a crucified life. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/drpC0uavzgY.mp4>

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