

Choose The Way of the Cross

Lesson #1

Scripture: Matthew 16:24 "...If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

Introduction:

In our world today we see crosses everywhere. Maybe some of you have a piece of jewelry with a cross on it. We have a cross out front on our building, as do many churches across our country. Have you noticed that we even have little crosses on most of our communion trays?

We sing a song with the words "at the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, and the burdens my hearts rolled away..." I take pause to consider that spirituality truly begins at the foot of the cross.

You see it really takes a trip to the cross to see the light. Many people have made the trip to Calvary, and watched in their minds eye as Jesus gave his life for theirs. But the numbers dwindle when we stop and ask how many have understood that they, as children of God, will have to embrace the same self giving love for others.

With each trip to Calvary, are we merely reminded of some historical event? Or have we come to the understanding that where Jesus stood, we shall stand also. Have we understood that the work of the cross represented an avenue between heaven and earth? And, God wants that avenue kept open.

The trip to Calvary should remind us of the cross that we are suppose to take up. It should forever change our hearts as we surrender ourselves to God's will as we watch the blood drip from our saviors veins.

Without the cross we would have no savior. No savior means no promises. No promises means no hope. No Hope leaves us to be pitied above all men.

Transitional Statement:

Church, we understand the importance of the birth of Jesus, the life of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus but at the cross we see God's own alter, where his love poured forth upon the earth.

And considering the word's of John 3:16 as we gaze upon the cross we see a savior and the promise of God being fulfilled as true hope comes into view.

Lesson:

I. The first thing perhaps is to understand the power of the cross.

A. Without the events of the cross

1. We would be separated from God Isa. 59:1-2
2. God couldn't even look upon us Hab. 1:13
3. We wouldn't be able to set things straight....or make things right again.
4. We would be forever dead in our sins Romans 6:23

B. At the cross we see the greatest love ever known John 15:13

1. God Almighty Himself, makes a sacrifice of atonement upon His own alter on our behalf.
2. Using His greatest gift....His Son Jesus
3. "...*the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world*" John 1:29
4. We should be reminded that the events of the cross hold great power.

1 Corinthians 1:18 *"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

II. Then understand that spirituality, in many ways, begins at our own Calvary.

A. Matthew 16:24 "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

1. We are to take up our own cross
2. And do as Jesus did

B. With a full surrender to God.

C. A willingness to give ourselves for people who hate us.

D. With a concept of forgiveness

E. With an understanding of Love

F. Questions we might ask ourselves:

1. How much desire do we have to be a student in the school of Jesus?
2. How much are we willing to give up to excel in Him?
3. How much are we willing to suffer to be identified with Him?
4. How much are we willing to go wherever Jesus leads us?

III. Spirituality leads us to truths about our own Calvary

A. First, we must let God show it to us.

1. The truth is many people have served at man made Calvary'
2. It is God's path we seek Jer. 10:23
3. Being attentive to His call and direction in our lives.

B. Then we must have a deep faith or conviction

1. We must come thirsty to God's word and drink deeply
2. Building our hearts on trust in His word Romans 10:17
3. Marked by a passion of the heart

C. We must also fan into flames the desire, of our hearts for God.

1. Making it our first priority to walk as He walked and talk as He talked
2. To model ourselves after Him
3. To be holy as He is holy.

C. And understanding that we are living sacrifices Romans 12:1

IV. The cost of embracing our Calvary's

A. Luke 14:28-33

"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

B. Matthew 16:25-26

25 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

C. Philippians 3:7-9

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

D. Colossians 3:9-10

9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him

E. 2 Corinthians 5:17

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

F. 1 John 2:15-16

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world

G. James 4:4

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

H. John 12:25-26

25 " He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

I. In short:

1. Friends will often desert us
2. Families will struggle to understand.
3. Sometimes we will have no place to lay our heads.
4. We might even be run out of town
5. Or you might even be stoned at the city gate.

J. BUT GOD WILL BE PLEASE SEEING YOU....AS HE SAW HIS SON

Conclusion:

In many ways the cross connects heaven with earth. It stands as a beacon for those lost in the dark.

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

God tells us to pick up our beacons and let our light shine

Matthew 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.