

About a week ago, Madison, our 5-year-old had her routine doctor's visit. They arrive at the doctor's office Madison know's that she's going to the doctor and starts to get a little nervous. They perform their preliminary screening, visual hearing weight ask a few questions, take blood pressure check the pulse. Everythings good! A few minutes later the doctor comes in asks a few questions, ensures that she's hitting her milestones and everythings good! She says the nurse will be in shortly to give her her shots. A few minutes later the nurse knocks on the door and walks in and says alright, okay.

And Madison says what every 5-year-old would say, Let's do it!. No she doesn't say that. She says, "let London go first!" London says, Aww it's okay sweet girl, I don't get any shots this time around. She immediately goes over to Deana, my wife, with tears whelling up in her eyes and looks at her, like mommy are you going to save me from this. Deana say's, "baby it's going to be really fast. She's simply going to prick you in the leg and it will be all over." Madison is terrified. She cups her head into Deana's arm, like not going to let this happen to me, right mommy? Deana says alright Maddy. She holds her hand down to brace her in place. Madison in that moment revealed something that is true of all of us.

We humans will avoid pain at all cost. I know that's true for me. Listen to these quotes about pain.

"It is easier to find men who will volunteer to die, than to find those who are willing to endure pain with patience." – Julius Ceasar

"One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain." – Bob Marley

No person wants to experience pain. We avoid pain and suffering at all cost. [And] this is problematic, isn't it? It's problematic because as followers of Christ, we are called to a life that shapes us into the likeness of Christ, a life that will include suffering.

In Mark 8 right after Jesus tells of all the suffering he must endure, [show Mark 8:34] he calls the crowds to him with his disciples and says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Our problem is that we have been called to bear our own cross. [And] because of the pain/suffering associated with the cross, we'd rather not bear the cross, instead we'd rather just wear the cross. [And] we're really good at that aren't we? We wear cross pendants, cross earrings, we wear the cross t-shirts, we wear the cross tatoos, we place cross decals on our cars, cross screen savers, pictures of the cross nailed to our living room wall... We've become experts at wearing the cross.

But today we're going to learn that **Disciples don't just wear the cross, [no] Disciples bear the cross.** As we follow Jesus, we don't just get to talk the talk and wear Christianity like it's a fad, we walk the walk and live it. We live and die in a

manner consistent with what we profess to believe in Jesus Christ. Disciples don't just wear the cross, Disciples bear the cross.

If you've been following us this year, we have been following Jesus through the book of Mark, as he teaches his disciples and us what it means to follow him. [And] today we're going to follow Jesus to the cross. We are about to witness the final moments of his life. [And] If you were with us last week, Jesus had just been unjustly sentenced in a Kangaroo court, a court that ignored the facts of his case and ignored due process and disregarded legal ethics in order to come to a predetermined conclusion that Jesus was guilty and needed to die. That was last week. Today we will witness the carrying out of that sentence.

As we witness Jesus' final moments, we will learn three important truths about the cross.

Turn with me to Mark 15:21.

The first important truth we learn today is that...

Followers of Jesus willfully suffer the cross. Followers of Jesus willfully / intentionally / purposefully embrace pain and suffering for Jesus's sake and for the sake His message, the gospel.

We're going to see that Jesus bear the cross and willfully suffered. He's walking toward his execution. And he suffered in four ways. The first way he suffered is...

Jesus suffered physical pain.

²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

Jesus suffered physical pain. Two things indicate this. First, a passerby, Simon of Cyrene had to be summoned/forced to carry the nearly 40lb horizontal wooden beam for Jesus as he walked toward his execution. An indication that his body was in bad shape. Secondly, His pain had to be apparent because Jewish sympathizers offered him a narcotic drink, wine mixed with myrrh, a modern-day equivalent of morphine, to ease the excruciating pain that was happening and about to happen. And we're told that Jesus did not take it. Jesus chooses to endure with full consciousness the suffering appointed for him.

Now many of us in this room have not experienced physical pain as a result of representing Christ and his message, but many believers around the world have. According to Open Doors, a global research network that supports Christians around the world, on their 2024 world watch list an average more than 13 Christians are killed each

day for their faith. It's roughly 5000 Christians each year. As you bear your cross you may experience physical pain. Remember, Jesus suffered physical pain.

Secondly...

Jesus suffered humiliation.

²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him (hurling abuse at him), wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

Jesus suffered shame and humiliation. As Jesus' limbs are affixed to the wooden crossbeam and vertical post with nails, and hoisted into the air, he is mocked, shamed and humiliated. Mark goes to great lengths to show us that the executioners, those who passed by, the chief priests, the scribes, even the robbers mocked him, they used verbal violence and they stripped him of his clothes. And while Jesus wasn't unable to come down from the cross, he was unwilling, his power was restrained by his love.

It's like being open about your faith and its corresponding values in your workplace or on social media. You will quickly learn that the opposing world is intolerant of your views. You may be attacked, publicly shamed, unfollowed, blocked because Christians are seen as non-inclusive. Christians beliefs about God, marriage, the unborn, and more are not welcome in the public square. As you bear your cross, You may experience humiliation. Remember, Jesus experienced public shame and humiliation. [he suffered physical pain, humiliation] Third,

Jesus suffered loneliness.

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

While many believe that Jesus was abandoned by God (here), what Jesus was doing with this phrase is what any good rabbi did when teaching a lesson. He quoted the scriptures. Jesus quotes the first line in the messianic, psalm 22 to remind the onlookers and us that this was foretold, this was apart of the plan all along – that Jesus would be abandoned not by God, but by his closest followers, who by the way, are nowhere to be found.

Where are James and John, the disciples who in Mark 10:37 requested to sit at Jesus' right and left hand? Where is Peter, the disciples who in Mark 14:29 declared, that even if all fall away, I will not? Where is Judas, the disciple who earlier in the same chapter sought ways to betray Jesus? Where are the other eight? I'll tell you where they are... they are nowhere to be found. [And] While Jesus is the central focus of this text, so is the absence of his disciples. Mark is showing us that of the more than 15 people he references during Jesus final moments, not one is a disciple. Jesus was left to die alone.

It's like growing up with your best friend and while you still get together for coffee and discuss several topics, the most important topic of faith is not up for discussion. It's difficult to have a friend and still be alone.

It's like being a parent or a sibling growing up with your family, sharing life's most precious moments together, and because others in your family don't share your faith, you feel lonely at family gatherings. And it's so lonely that sometimes you chose to stay home.

As you bear your cross, You may experience loneliness. Remember, Jesus suffered loneliness. So, Jesus experienced physical pain, humiliation, loneliness, fourth,

Jesus suffered death. He gave his life on that cross.

³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.

The loud cry Mark refers to is either "into your hands I commit my spirit" which we know because of (Luke 23:46) or "It is finished" (John 19:30). Either way, Mark wants us to know that Jesus uttered a loud cry before he dies.

The one who refused to take the morphine to ease the pain, the one who was unwilling to come down from the cross because of his unfailing love, the one who was abandoned by his closest followers, Jesus, the man who was unjustly sentenced willfully embraced his cross and suffered.

[And] As followers of Jesus we must willfully suffer for Him and His message, the gospel. Why? Because **Disciples don't just wear the cross, Disciples bear the cross.**

But that's not all we learn. The second thing we learn about the cross is that when we suffer the cross...

Nonbelievers come to faith in Jesus Christ. [X2]

We're going to see an (unnamed) centurion comes to believe in Jesus.

³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

An unnamed centurion comes to believe in Jesus.

Now there is much debate on the which curtain was torn at the temple after Jesus dies. Is it the inner curtain or the outer curtain, each interpretation has significance. My conclusion is that we don't know. Mark's phrasing here does not lean either way. But we do know that God is the only one who can tear this nearly 42-foot-tall curtain from the top down, and we do know that immediately following that tear, a centurion comes to believe in Jesus.

From this centurion's perspective, who probably has seen many crucifixions, the way Jesus behaves on the cross is so different from other crucifixions that he confesses that **Jesus' has to be the Son of God.**¹ **A theme that Mark wants us to know. He said it in the beginning, the middle, and now the end.** This is not completely a logic conclusion. It is supernatural. How do we know? Because Mark does not tell us that everyone who witnessed Jesus' death believed in him. God opens the centurion's eyes.

In classic-Jesus fashion, even during his death, he fishes for men.

[And] as disciples to whom he said, follow me and I will make you become fishers of men (1:17), Jesus continues to teach how to fish even through his death. When we suffer for Jesus' sake and for the sake of his message, nonbelievers will come to faith in Him.

It reminds me of a powerful story in Nik Ripkens book, the insanity of God. [tell/read story]

When we suffer the cross, and live for Jesus and his message, nonbelievers come to faith in Jesus. People witness our life and believe. This is what we've learned so far.

The last thing we learn from Jesus' final moments is that...

Bearing the cross takes courage.

A prominent Counselman named Joseph gathered up courage to request and bury Jesus' body.

42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage (gathered up courage, NASB) and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was

¹ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Mk 15:33–41.

dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid. 2

Joseph is a Jewish religious leader who has been a secret follower of Christ. He undoubtedly has divergent viewpoints from the majority of the Jewish leaders and has watched in grief as his fellows condemned and executed Jesus. Until something happens inside Joseph. Verse 43 says that he gathered up courage and asks Pilate for the body of Jesus.³

This phrase “gather up courage” is a single Greek word that means to be bold and courageous, undaunted by difficulties and fearless in the face of danger. It’s a word that embraces the cross. It’s like the courage of fighting men, it’s the rocklike courage of a mother who has lost three sons in the war. It’s doing what is necessary despite the personal risks.

And Joseph, knowing that he would jeopardize his status and his life, he puts everything on the line for Jesus.

Bearing the cross takes courage. Standing for Jesus and proclaiming his message in a world that is growing increasingly hostile toward the faith takes courage.

Our prayer is that God would grant us the courage to bear our cross. Because
Disciples don’t just wear the cross, Disciples bear the cross.

God uses suffering to form us into the image of Christ. There’s no way around. There’s no way to avoid it. Christlikeness come only when we go through suffering for the sake of Christ and the gospel. So, let’s take courage [ladies and gentlemen] and suffer well. Amen.

Let’s recap what have we learned today from the final moments of Jesus’ life. We’ve learned that...

As followers of Jesus, we must intentionally/willfully suffer for the cause of Christ and the gospel, because when we do people will believe. How must we do this? We gather up courage, boldly embrace suffering, and put everything on the line for Jesus.

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34).” Let us pray.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mk 15:47.

³ Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Mk 15:42–47.