

The Cross–Taking Life

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Luke 9:23-27
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Please turn to Luke chapter 9. That's where we're going to be today, and as you're turning there, I want to tell you about a story. Stephen McAlpine in his book, *Being the Bad Guy*, it's a great book, he tells the story of Ernest Shackleton. Some of you may know who he is. At the start of the 20th century, Shackleton was looking to build a team for a treacherous polar expedition. So, he placed an advertisement in the local paper in England, and it said this, 'Men wanted for a hazardous journey, low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness, safe return, doubtful, honor and recognition in the event of success.' That's it. That was the ad. Now, I bet you're wondering how many people even responded to such an ad. Well, 5,000 men responded to that ad. None asked for craft coffee, stock options, or a vegan menu, nothing wrong necessarily with those things. But that kind of trip. Hardships were right up front. He was establishing what was at stake and what type of person needed to go.

Now, this is very similar to what we talked about in the first sermon in this series, *The Cross Taking Life*, when I talked about pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for who famously said, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die', and that's referencing Jesus' call to his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. It's right up front. In both cases, the stake is high and it's right up front. There's no bait and switch. There are no mincing words. It helps you understand the expectations that are at play. Now, the difference is this. You don't have to go to Antarctica. Thankfully, we don't have to go to Antarctica. I like the heat in Arizona. Antarctica is not that, it's the opposite of that.

But as Christians, we must take our cross. It's not optional for us. It's a part of who we are as followers of Jesus, who took his cross. So, in today's passage, the second passage that Christ calls his disciples to take up their cross, we're going to see a reiteration of some of the themes that we saw the first time in the first passage from Matthew 10, but we're going to have a further look at the implications of what it means to follow Jesus. We're getting a greater picture as the revelation of what's taking place progresses through the gospels. What we find once again is that Jesus raises the bar and clarifies that to take up one's cross is not a one-time thing, but it's an ongoing thing. If we can call it a thing. There's a beginning, there's an end, and there's a lot in between.

In this passage in Luke 9:23-27, our main point is this, as we look at it today, taking up one's cross is a daily duty, an essential characteristic of every Christian. A daily duty, an essential characteristic for every Christian. The Christian life is a cruciform life. We're justified because of what Jesus did on the cross for our sins. His cross was unique. He paid for our sins. He died there so that we might be declared, not guilty and declared righteous by faith. It's a gift that we receive

by faith. Once we're saved, we are put on a pathway of sanctification growing in Christ likeness. And that is marked also by a cross that we take in following Jesus. Now, before we get into our passage today, I want to make sure we understand the context. That's always important when we look to the scriptures.

In Luke 9:18-22, this is that part where Peter makes the right confession of who Jesus is. Jesus asked the question, "Who do you say that I am?" He said, "You're the Christ of God." That's the right answer. How do we know? Because Jesus said, that's the right answer. There is a right answer to who Jesus is. You don't get to decide who Jesus is. It's been decided. And Jesus affirms that confession in Peter, but he also prophesies that later that day or later that time Peter would deny Christ. Not only that, but that Christ would suffer many things. He would be rejected by the chief priest and scribes. He would be killed. He would be raised on the third day. The Messiah must suffer, and that was predicted in the Old Testament. And yet it really took his disciples off guard, as places like Isaiah 53 should have made it clear, but it wasn't. So, what it means to follow Jesus becomes clear as the story progresses, and what Jesus does is lay down the expectations of his disciples. The cross taking life is for the Christian. It's not how we become a Christian. But for those who are born again in Christ, this is the path that you are on and need to be on.

Would you please stand in honor of God's word, as we read it. Together, starting in verse 23 of Luke chapter 9. If you're able to stand. If you're not able to stand, you can stay seated, of course. It says this. "And he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." May God bless this word to our hearts. You may be seated.

What we see here in this passage and what we're going to take a look at in this sermon today is five characteristics of taking ones cross daily. These are five adjectives of the cruciform life. Now, this is the second time that Jesus calls his disciples to take up their cross. But unlike the first time though, he connects it to a prediction of his own death, of his own cross, and of course, we have the full picture. We know what happens in this story, where we are on the timeline. For them, it's unfolding before their eyes, and they're still understanding though, a level of the cost, knowing that to take up your cross and receiving a cross would be a loyalty to Jesus, as opposed to a loyalty to Caesar. It would mean self-sacrifice in order to do that, and so, that was clear, at least at this point.

So, let's take a look at these characteristics. The *first characteristic* that we see here is that taking up one's cross is **Purposeful. It's purposeful.** Look at verse 23 again. He says, "And he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me." Let him do this. Let her. It's purposeful. It's not accidental. It's not optional. Here is what's at

stake. You need to take it. You take it. It's yours. Now, how do we know that? Because of, let's just go back a little bit where it says there, "And he said to all." Who's the 'all' there? The "all" is his disciples, the ones that were sitting there listening to this that's who he's talking to. That means there's not a disciple who doesn't take up their cross. You've got to be purposeful in this. In other words, there's no excuse clause. You can't bring a doctor's note. Johnny can't take up his cross because he's allergic to suffering. That's not going to fly in this situation. Jesus took his cross voluntarily, John 10:18. Remember he said, "No one takes this of me. No one forces me. I do this of my own accord." Not only that, he did it with joy. Hebrews 12:1 tells us that he took up his cross with joy. These are the ways in which we emulate Christ in taking our cross. His was unique, and yet the part that we follow are these parts of self-sacrifice, this choice, this purposefulness. Very few things of importance in life are accidental. You don't accidentally get married. You don't accidentally go to school and graduate. You don't accidentally get a job.

Now, there's exceptions in some cases. But the norm is that those things are purposeful. You have a plan. You choose to do this. You follow through with that, and that's what's taking place here. Let him take his cross. Let her take her cross. You take it. Now, in this intentionality, what you're saying, then, you might be thinking, Todd, am I then saying that I'm going to intentionally suffer? The answer is, yes. Now, for us as humans, we suffer. It's part of the human condition. I would say there's three ways in which we suffer. One, just by being human and living here in a world that's broken by sin. We experience physical suffering, physical pain, emotional, spiritual, it's all a part of what everyone experiences. The second way too. Poor choices, sinful choices, our own sin, not just sin in a general way that has broken the world and broken creation when Adam and Eve sinned, but our own sin. We experience a reaping and sowing for the choices that we make, and sin hurts us. It's painful. It has painful consequences. But the third way of suffering is what is specific to what Jesus is talking about here. You're consenting to suffering and suffering, not in a general sense, but suffering because of the name of Christ, that you bear his name, you will suffer like he suffered. That is the choice here. You're purposefully embracing it. Now, why the cross and why the suffering? Because in doing so and claiming Christ and following his path, you're going to go head long against the world.

So, you're going to feel that tension and it shouldn't be a surprise to you. Peter says this in 1 Peter, 4:12, in this type of suffering that comes because who we are in Christ. He says this, "Beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." Sometimes that happens, Ooh, I want to follow Jesus. I want eternal life. That all sounds good. He's going to make all my dreams come true. Then you find out it's not quite like that. That it's difficult. People won't like you because you're a Christian. In fact, they might persecute you. They might disown you if you're in a family that doesn't believe in Jesus. They may think you're crazy, and you're like, wait a minute. This is harder than I thought it was. That's taking up our cross. That is the purposefulness. The cross is the way to embrace that trial.

Again, why the cross? Well, I think Jesus illustrates this well in Matthew chapter 7. Not that Jesus needs my approval on whether it's good or not, but Matthew chapter 7, he tells us this by way of illustration. He says that there is a narrow way and the narrow way leads to life. That's the way of Christ to follow him and to believe in him. That's the narrow way. There's another way. It's the wide road. It's the easy road. It leads to destruction. These are a war of promises. The world promises ease and comfort and all of these things, but unfortunately, and very seriously and soberly, it leads to death. Jesus, on the other hand, says the narrow way is difficult, it's challenging, but it leads to life. That's the tension that we find. The cross is the symbol of this tension, this war between what the world offers and what Jesus offers. The cross is symbolic of the worst that the world throws against you in following Jesus. It's the worst that was thrown against Christ in taking his own cross for our salvation, and it's symbolic of the worst that we face. What Jesus has done in doing this then, is set up a clear way of determining if your faith is real. It's not determining it so he can figure it out. It's determining it so that we can have the assurance and understanding that we're on the right road, right? We like the signpost. Am I on the right road? Yeah, it says, you're headed this direction. You're headed that direction. To take up our cross helps us understand that we are on the right road, that narrow way that leads to life. So in this sense, the purposefulness of taking up our cross is a declaration that says, I refuse the wide road. I am my savior's and he is mine no matter what happens, no matter what I must endure. That's the purposefulness nature of taking up our cross.

That then leads to #2) *It's Perpetual*, ongoing. This is really the tent-pole of all five of these characteristics. It's perpetual. It's the daily cross. It is ongoing and really, it's threefold, taking your cross daily, denying self and following Jesus. What that reveals to us is that there is no room for fair weather fans as Christians. Now, fair weather fan is someone who follows a team when all is well. They're winning, they're getting trophies. You buy the hat; you buy the shirt. This is great. It's great time. But then there's the time where it's not so great. Then you kind of give up on it. You throw the shirt away; you don't wear it in public. You don't want to be seen with it. You don't want anything to do with it. Well, Christianity is not about fandom. That's what sometimes people find. Oh, want to follow Jesus? Yay. There's a spiritual high that goes with it. Then they find there's a difficulty because there are these things that we face that goes headlong against the world, and there's a tension and it's not comfortable. Forget it. I give up. But there's a persistence. There's a perpetual nature to this. You don't leave in the seventh inning. That was to the Dodger fans out there who do that. Sorry. Sorry, you're stuck with me. Here we go. This daily nature of following Christ is obviously then, not a martyr's death simply. 11 of these disciples, as far as history tells us, died a martyr's death. That's a one-time offering. What Christ calls us to is a daily dying. He says the daily cross. Take up your cross daily. This is the only place that he says this, and he's indicating something very clear about this. It's very intrinsic to our identity. Think about the things that we do on a daily basis. We eat, we drink, we sleep, we're productive or hoping to be productive. We do work. We do school. We have relationships that we interact with on a daily basis. They're second nature. They're defining for us. It's our identity. Now Jesus is adding the most important aspect to our identity as Christians, you take

your daily cross. This is who you are. Paul says it this way, that we are to be a living sacrifice in Romans 12:1, and this eradicates any notion again of mere lip service that separates the wheat from the chaff, from the fans, from those who are truly disciples.

I like how Walter Chantry says it in his book, *The Shadow Of The Cross*. He says it this way, 'For a true believer, the cross is ubiquitous. It is lifelong. It is a daily weight. There is only one depository of the cross and that is the cemetery.' In other words, taking your cross is not a leisure activity. It's not a hobby. It's not something you take a vacation from, oh, I need a little break. I'm going to take it off for a while. You take it, you cling to it and then at death, you drop it off. You see, the end goal is not taking our cross, it's just what we do while we're here, until we get to be with Christ in glory. It secures us. It defines us. It is what we do on a daily basis. Now, we have this visual of the daily cross, but what does that really look like? Well, he tells us. Before and after up our daily cross, he says, "Let him deny himself and follow me." To deny, of course, is to refuse to pay any attention to, to disregard and renounce. And what is it that we deny, he says? Himself, you deny self. You deny herself, his-self. Now here's where the tension really hits because the world's mantra is what? It's all about you. It's all about self, self-fulfillment, self-identity. It's all about self-fulfillment, self-focus. You are the center of you.

In other words, you are your own God. John MacArthur says it this way. "The disciple is called to disown one's naturally depraved sinful self." That means that we are called to dethrone ourselves. That's what Jesus is calling us to do, dethrone you. This is humbling. This is a great act of humility in doing this, that we are not to live for ourselves. Paul tells us this in Philippians 2:3-4. He says it this way, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others." Then he gives an example, and who does he give an example? Jesus. "Having the same mind of Christ, who did not count equality with God, something to be grasped." Now what that means, well, it doesn't mean that he didn't grasp it. We're talking about mental. He couldn't understand what it means to be God. No, he's the second person of the Trinity. It doesn't mean that he stopped being God. What it meant was, though he was God, the God of the universe, he came and he wrapped himself in great humility in human flesh. He was born a baby. He was born in a manger. He lived a difficult life, a life that ultimately saw him go to a cross and die at the hands of his own creation. There's no greater example of humility. That's what we get at when we understand the cross, and this idea of denying self. Cross taking is the specific illustration of what it means to be humble and to deny self. Not only that, but our daily cross involves following Jesus. Now that sounds really obvious, doesn't it? But the force of the word that's there in the original Greek is this, "In this way, follow me." In what way? Denying self, taking up your cross and in this way, follow me. Not only that, verse 22, he says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and on the third day, be raised." Deny self, take up your cross and in this way, follow me.

In 1 John 2:6, it says, if you say you follow Jesus, you'll walk the same way as Jesus. Now why does that even need to be said? Well, that's because there are many who claim Jesus, but don't

actually follow him. They like to check the box, raise the hand, maybe identify as a Christian, but there's really no difference in their life. Talking to someone I dearly loved, who had concern for their son and his life choices. But then she said, "But I know he is a Christian because in 1978, he went forward at a tent revival meeting." Well, that's all well and good. The problem was, there is absolutely from that moment on no evidence in his life that he follows Jesus. There's been no choices in his life that says that he loves Jesus, that he follows Jesus and that he does what Jesus says. So for her, she had some sort of confidence in some sort of walking down an aisle. Maybe that's you. Oh yeah, I prayed a little prayer when I was a kid or I went forward at a tent meeting at a church. Yet there's no evidence in your life. If you follow Jesus, you keep following him. Paul tells us this and Colossians chapter 1, if you want to turn there, feel free to do so. Colossians 1:21-23, Paul talks about the perseverance of us as believers. He says this, "And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds." That was our former identity. Listen to this. This is the gospel. Verse 22. "He has now reconciled this in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you wholly and blameless and above reproach before him." That's the good news of Jesus. But verse 23 starts with, if. "If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation, under heaven and of which I, Paul, became a minister." This isn't a, you need to help save you. What this is saying is, the evidence that you have been truly saved is that you will persevere to the end. You will continue in the faith. If you are a follower of Jesus, you won't stop following him. Now, it also doesn't mean that you don't trip, you don't stumble, that you don't have bad days, bad weeks, maybe even a bad season. But what it means is, the course of your life is in one direction and that's towards Jesus and following him till death, with your cross on your back. Sometimes having to be carried by Jesus himself along the way.

Let me ask you, do you never stop following Jesus wherever, whenever, however, that may lead? It's not a fad. It's not a phase. It's not a hobby. Are you a part-time Christian? There's no such thing. John Calvin says it in his institutes. He says, "For as the surest source of destruction to men is to obey themselves, so the only Haven of safety is to have no other will, no other wisdom than to follow the Lord wherever he leads." JC Ryle, the famous Anglican bishop, sums up these first two points, the purposefulness and the perpetual of following and taking up our cross. He says this, "No person is excused and no day is accepted." That's our purpose and that's the perpetual nature of taking our cross.

That leads to #3) ***Paradoxical***. See a trend there. They all start with P. I wanted to make sure this word was right, not just so that I'm putting P words in there. So I had to look it up to make sure that I was on the right track. Maybe you already know what it means but let me give you a definition. It says, 'The seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.' What are some examples? Well, if you love someone, you set them free. I don't know if that's true, but that's a paradoxical statement. How about, to spend money to make money. Youth is wasted on the young. No amens on that one. I only got one the last hour. All the other services, including you, no amens. Amen to that. How about this one, one thing I know, I know nothing. That's a paradoxical statement.

Now Jesus is not being funny here in verse 24, but it's a paradoxical statement. Listen to this. He says, "For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." For my sake is what he's asking, what he's saying here. Life is your soul. It's the very essence and center of who you are, more than just the flesh that we see. It's who you truly are. If you want to save it, we're not talking necessarily about salvation, though that's certainly connected here. That word for saving, he who wants to save his life is the one who's trying to preserve it, hold onto it. Remain self-focused, self-gratifying. That's the saving of life that he's referring to here. That is a failure to deny self, in other words. The irony, as much as you try to cling onto it, hold onto it, you'll lose it, and when you lose it is when you face Christ at the end of life. I try to hold onto it, but you face Christ and you face judgment. That's not an easy message to hear, and that's what Jesus is telling us. On the other hand, if you lose one's life, and what does that mean? That means too, you guessed it, take up your cross daily, deny self and follow him, here's the promise. You'll find it. Who wants to find their life? I hope your heart is saying, yes, that's me. That's what Jesus is offering. It kind of feels like Jesus is saying a lot of negatives here, but you're missing the implications. He is telling us the greatest of positives. Here's life. How many of you're trying to save, hold on tightly, I'm the captain of my ship, I live by my own code? That is the wide road that leads to destruction. Jesus is warning us, don't be on that road, and he leaves us now in verse 25 with a rhetorical question, a rhetorical question, meaning that the answer should be obvious. "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" I tell you what, that verse describes so much of what we see in life. Those who are pursuing, trying to gain the whole world only to forfeit their soul. Gaining the whole world seems like the ultimate prize and profit, but it will cost you your very life.

Two actresses recently extolled the blessings of abortion, saying that if they hadn't had abortions, they would not have their career. Michelle Williams, as she was receiving a little golden idol, which is kind of fitting, she said without abortion, I couldn't have been able to do this. So what, right? Seems so clear to us. Alyssa Milano, without abortion, she had two in one year, she said, she would not have her career. So what? Both careers, not even A-list actors, they're spinning their souls for way less than the whole world. That's the point. Even if you were to get the whole world, it's not worth it. But we come more cheaply. Judas traded in Christ for 30 pieces of silver. Why? Because he wanted a different Messiah. He didn't want the real one. He didn't want the one that saves your soul. That would have to suffer. He didn't like that suffering talk, all this suffering talk. Wait a minute. I want the guy who's like David, who takes down Caesar and ascends the throne in Jerusalem and makes me treasurer. We know that a little bit from what we see in Judas' life, and we see it in his final demise when he trades in Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, only to regret it and then hang himself. What a tragedy. Now Jesus is not calling us to daily cross taking because he enjoys your misery. Or this is some type of penance that you need to make up for the bad things that you've done, so you need to take your cross. No, his cross was sufficient. We sang about it earlier. It is finished. He paid for our sins on the cross. But this is the life of facing a world that is hostile to you. Cross taking is hard, but what you're seeing here is Jesus giving us some amazing promises. He's telling us how to find our life, how to gain life, how to

save our life. It is life versus death. It is heaven versus hell. He says in Matthew 5, the meek will inherit the earth. He's saying here, if you try to gain the whole world, you'll lose your soul. The meek understand they need a savior and they receive Jesus himself, the ultimate treasure. That's the promise. Let me ask you, what are you trading for Jesus at the cost of your soul? Here's the resounding words that he's saying here. It's not worth it. It is not worth it.

That leads to **#4) Prominent**. When something is prominent, it is important. It is noticeable. It stands out. It's obvious. I wear my wedding ring prominently on my finger. I am unashamed to be married to Lisa. I'm actually proud of that fact. I want everyone to see she's taken me and I'm taken. This is what verse 26 is getting at, "For whoever's ashamed of me and of my words of him will the Son of Man be ashamed." That echoes what we talked about in the first sermon in Matthew 1:32-33, the public acknowledgement. Why would you be embarrassed? Why would Christ not be prominent in your life? Paul in Romans 1:16. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Why? Because it is the salvation. Why would be ashamed of the very thing that saves us? Not only is it Jesus we're not to be ashamed of, but he makes a very clear distinction here, for whoever's ashamed of me and my words.

You see you can't separate Jesus from his words. The person and message of Jesus cannot be separated. He is the word made flesh in John chapter 1. Yet that's what happens a lot of times. People say they like Jesus, but then they don't like his words. They only maybe parts of his words. He becomes Mr. Potatohead Jesus, you put the parts on that you like, and then you have this thing that doesn't resemble who Jesus truly is in the word and who he's revealed himself to be. They don't like passages like these passages right here, "Take up to your cross and follow me." Oh no, no, no. I just want to be loving and do nice things for the poor people like Jesus. If that's all you think of who he is, you've missed a whole lot of who Jesus is. In a pew survey from a few years back, just a few years ago, 75% of Americans identify as Christians. That's a shocking statement, but that's the truth of that pew survey.

But get this, only 25% believe that the Bible is God's word. How is that even possible? How do you even know you're a Christian unless you read the Bible and it's true, to understand what a Christian actually is. Again, as a note, we're not talking about just the red letters here. I think sometimes they do an injustice to help us think that the red letters are somehow better than the black letters, that somehow Jesus and the Holy Spirit and the Father at odds in writing this book. This is a triune book written by the triune God, from Genesis to Revelation. It's all God's word. And you can't separate Jesus from the word. So let me ask you, what is prominent about you? What is it that you want to be known for?

It's easy to wear a cross, nothing necessarily wrong with that. It's easy to get a tattoo, though, it's painful. It's harder to actually take up your cross and follow Christ. That's where the rubber meets the road. Let me ask you who in your daily life would be surprised to know that you followed Jesus. It might be for two reasons, one, you don't ever talk about him. They wouldn't know because you never said anything. Or maybe it's, you've said some things about it, but your life doesn't match what you say. Boy, that's convicting, isn't it? It is to me. Here's the bottom

line. To trade the approval of Jesus for the approval of man is the ultimate failure because it means forfeiting eternal life for eternal punishment, to exchange true treasure for the fleeting, temporary, ultimately valueless rewards of men. You see, shame is related to the fear that the gospel will somehow disappoint and not accomplish what it promises. Identifying with Jesus recognizes that the gospel is the power of God that will not fail. Take your cross, follow him.

That leads to **#5) *The Path to Glory***. Jesus is so kind here because he doesn't want us to miss his glory. He says in verse 26, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the father and of the holy angels." What an incredible statement. Every time we watch a movie or read a book or watch a TV show, we're trusting the author. We're trusting the writer. We'll endure the twists and the turns as long as it ends well, and there's a happy ending. I don't understand fiction that doesn't have happy endings. Life has sad endings, I get that. But if you're writing a fictional story, let it always end happy. I'm just selling that out. That's just for free, extra charge, my own opinion. Harrowing ride is worth it and sometimes adds to the fact that it's the sweetest of endings, right? Ladies. That's why you re-watch *Pride and Prejudice* over and over and over again. Or read the book, right? You just, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth, just get together. You think if I could just have a 10-minute conversation with him at the beginning, it would be a much shorter story. But what makes it such a great story is all the twist... Okay. I've seen it a couple times too. Okay? I'm confessing that. What makes it so great is the ending. It all comes down to "ah" it's so satisfying in the end. Rocky gets beat up all those times, but in the end, he wins and that's satisfying in these stories, and so on. We could go through every story that is so satisfying to us.

This is what Jesus is saying. He's the author of life. And he's saying this ending will not disappoint. You take your cross. It's nothing compared to what is going to happen if you do. The Son of Man is coming in his glory and the glory of the father and of the holy angels. Please don't miss this, is what he's saying. We see it sometimes as a negative. But what we're seeing here is that there's no price tag worth giving up our soul that we'd miss this. The Son of Man is a term of some of the various offices of what the Son of Man means. That's one of the predicted sayings of who Jesus would be, who the Messiah would be. The Son of Man. Meaning that he would be the empathetic one. He's wrapped himself in human flesh and knows what we go through and the pains and the struggles that we go through. That's the high priest that Jesus is. He can empathize and sympathize with us. We can't ever say to him, you don't know what it's like. He says, no, I do.

The second aspect of that Son of Man is the one who comes glory and in judgment. He will vindicate all that he suffered. He will vindicate all that you suffer as a taker of a cross. You see the path leads to that. Taking your cross leads to seeing and experiencing Christ's glory, and it's evident in verse 27. It says, "But I tell you truly", this is an interesting and mysterious little verse, "but I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." Now there's some wacky interpretations of that. There's actually some people who believe that there are a couple of disciples still wandering around on earth, waiting for

Christ to return. That's wacky. Okay? That's not what that means. Because they stopped reading. You got to keep reading because what happens in verses 28 and following is that Peter James and John, some got to see Christ peel back his humanity and show his glory, and man, they didn't know what to do with themselves when they saw it. They got a little bitty glimpse of what all of us who follow Christ will see at the end of all time and even more. It's a reminder to us that this is a path to glory. Taking your cross leads to seeing and experiencing the glory of Christ at the end, and it will be worth it all, no matter what you go through.

So, let me ask you what glory are you looking for? Is it fame? Is it money? Is it good grades? Is it education? Is it the glory of Facebook, TikTok or Instagram? Here's the good news. Life in Jesus is the only life actually worth living. These are the promises that Jesus is implying in this. There's a better way than living for self. There's a better way than gaining the whole world only to forfeit your soul. There's a better way than following all these crazy places and people, and there are better way is to follow me, no matter what happens.

In fact, as we wrap this up, there's two parables, the two shortest parables that Jesus taught. Matthew 13:44-46. It's the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price. Let me read it to you because it gets at the heart of what Christ is communicating here to us in taking our cross. "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one Pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Does Jesus have all of you? If he doesn't, he doesn't have any of you, any part of you, and likewise, if you only have part of Jesus, you don't have any part of Jesus. Taking up our cross reminds of whose we are. We're purposeful. You take it. It's your purpose. What would people say your purpose is? It's perpetual, it's daily. It's paradoxical. It's very counterintuitive. It's prominent. Should be prominent. It's not hidden. It's the path to glory.

The Olympian athlete goes through all kinds of disciplines, self-sacrifices, money, pain to the body in the hopes of getting a gold medal. Do we even remember? We can maybe name a couple of gold medal athletes. We don't remember, and that gold medal perishes eventually. But the one who takes their cross daily have as a guarantee, the reward of Christ. So what Jesus is doing here is clarifying, continue to clarify what it really means to follow him. It's a daily dying. If you're not a Christian today, here's what you need to take up. You need to take up Jesus. You need to believe in him. His cross secured for you salvation. It's a gift to you. He paid for it with his life. You receive it by faith. Do that today. If you are a Christian, maybe this week hasn't gone too well. This is a very convicting sermon. It's a convicting passage. But here's what we take away. We take our cross daily. We take it to work. We take it to school. We take our cross to the mall. We take our cross online. We take it when we are with our spouse. When we're with our family, our kids, our parents, our friends. We take it when we are with our enemies and even strangers. We take it to church. We take it overseas. We take it to bed. We take it to the voting booth. We take it to the sports arena. We take it to the bank. Ultimately, we take it to death. Let it define

you, mark you, determine how you live. And if so, every splinter and every nail will be worth it. Nothing will keep you from Jesus. Let's pray.

Jesus, we are grateful today for these precious promises, for you to say, we need to take up our cross. In fact, we can't do that apart from you. It's not us trying to figure that out, you are sending us on our way with a horrible burden on our back. Rather, it's the defining moment of our life, that we take our cross and we keep following till death, knowing that we have you as our treasure. And that there's nothing that this world has to offer that is better than you as our treasure, and the cross is a daily reminder of that tension that we face in a world that totally, and everyday questions that. Ourselves, the devil, the flesh, the world stands against us, wanting to offer us a cheap alternative that only leads to destruction. Help us be faithful as we follow you every day of our life. By your grace and in your grace, with your spirit empowering us and being united to you, we are grateful, and it's in your name we pray. Amen.