

The Radical Call of Following Jesus

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Matthew 10:32-39
July 24, 2022

Please turn to Matthew chapter 10. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has famously said, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him, come and die." Now, some of you know who Dietrich Bonhoeffer was, for those of you who don't, he was a Lutheran pastor during the time of Hitler, opposed Hitler, in light of his Christian convictions Bonhoeffer was hanged in April of 1945. As he opposed Hitler's tyranny. Now, Bonhoeffer was willing to die for his faith, both metaphorically, and literally, he died because of his convictions as a Christian. Not all Christians die a martyr's death. There are many that have, thousands. In the last century, we had more martyrs for the cause of Christ than all the other centuries from the first century through that combined, but not all Christians die a Martyr's death, but all Christians are called to die. This is the radical and amazing call of discipleship that Jesus gives to all of his followers.

This is not a select group of followers. It's everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ is called to come and die. This is discipleship 101, a disciple is just a fancy term for someone who follows. And in this case, following Jesus. Even though it's discipleship 101, we never graduate past it, it defines our life. This is how Jesus says it. In Matthew 16, 24, he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." This is the radical call that Jesus gives to come and die. And in this call to come and die, Jesus removes the asterisk from what it means to be a Christian. Now, what do I mean by that? We're going to look into the marketing world right now. A lot of times you might get an ad or see an ad and it says only \$50.

And then there's that funny little star in the top corner that you can barely see and oftentimes ignore. And that leads to another little star in the bottom, in the smallest font possible, it tells you what the actual cost is. It's not \$50, it's \$50 plus tax plus all these fees. And it comes out to be more like \$90. And so when you get the bill, you're like, I thought it was only \$50, but there was a hidden cost. Every world religion besides Christianity has a hidden cost. They don't tell you everything up front, because you wouldn't join, but once you've joined and you're a part of it, then they let out all the air. Jesus there's no air, it's right up front, come and die. Did Jesus miss the marketing campaign seminar of how to gain disciples. No, of course not. He is calling us to something greater than this life here. And it comes through, and take up your cross and follow me. Now, this is a radical and mind-bending notion in Western Christianity, where comfort driven mentality is now the norm.

I want my way, when I want it, and how I want it. I want my songs, I want my needs met. I want my program, and if I don't get it, I'm going to go someplace that will gladly offer it. But then we hear the words of Jesus from 2000 years ago, that gives quite a different story that says, come and die. Take up your cross and follow me. Now why is this important? Well it's because many people say that they belong to Christ.

They say they're Christian. Oh, I like Jesus. I love Jesus. He's great. He's a good teacher maybe, that's a common one, but Jesus sets up proof, proof for the inside for us to give us assurance. But also as a testimony to the outside, of those who are truly his, it's an authentication type of provision that he provides in this message of come and die. Right now, online sometimes when

you have to purchase something, you have to have an authentication you go through, they send you a text, there's a little code. And then after that, you do that little thing where you pick the pictures that all have the streetlight on it or the crosswalk. I never get it right the first time, but I'm grateful for it because it's authenticating to make sure that I'm actually buying that product and not somebody else that's a counterfeit. And that's what Jesus does for us here as well. He provides it so that no one is fooled. No one is a counterfeit as a true follower of him. So what Jesus does is he gives us a clear cut, authentication, he defines exactly what that means for anyone who seeks to claim to be his follower. It's followership 101 and it's of absolute utmost importance. In the passage we're going to look at today, this is the main point. Jesus makes it clear what is at stake for those who truly want to follow him. Those who are truly his, there's no ambiguity, there's no vaguery, there's not a casual notion. It is crystal clear, come and die.

Take up your cross and follow me. Now, I want to make this clear as well. Taking up our cross is not a work to be done, to be justified in God's sight, to receive salvation. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. It is a gift. Jesus went to his own cross, uniquely to purchase for us our salvation. He lived the perfect life, the life we couldn't live. He died the death, we should have died. He took on the father's wrath and offers us salvation free to us by faith, an act of his grace in him and him alone. That's justification. That's the fancy word to be declared, not guilty and to be declared righteous. There's another aspect. Once you are justified, you are born again to a new life. And in this new life sanctification takes place. That's where you are growing in holiness, another fancy theological term, growing in holiness, or more simply to be more and more like Jesus as you grow.

And so we follow his example. We are not saved by works, but we are saved for works. And those works are shaped in the form of a cross. They are cruci-form. That narrow way that we get on is shaped like a cross. So that's where we find ourselves in Matthew chapter 10. Let me give you the context of Matthew chapter 10, because that's always important when we're looking at the scriptures, Matthew 10 is really an ongoing aspect of Jesus in his 12 disciples. The first 15 verses, he sends out the 12 to cast out demons and to heal. And they come back and he warns them of coming persecution. And then from 26 through 31, he assures them not to fear. He's preparing them for what it means to be a disciple. And then all of that mounts up to verse 32 with this. So, would you mind standing in honor of God's word, as I read to you this place where we're going to be at today, we do this because it's God's word, it's infallible, it's inherent, it's authoritative in our life, it's sufficient.

So he says this. So all of this leading up to this. "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven, do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword for I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." May God bless his word to our hearts. You may be seated.

So what we find here in what Jesus said is four potential responses to the radical call of following Christ, you can call it a four-point authentication, if you will. It's not exhaustive, it's not everything, but it is clear and it's decisive, and it's helpful for us to understand what it means

to be truly a follower of Christ. And number one is this, to acknowledge Jesus publicly, that's a response to this. Many follow Jesus for healing, maybe for food, because they got caught up in the crowd frenzy, but Jesus authenticates it. **#1) is to acknowledge Jesus publicly.** Now why publicly? As he says here, for everyone who acknowledges me before men.

There's a public confession here, acknowledgement. Well, it takes bravery for some of you if we had you because of your personality we had, hey, come on up right now and let's talk to... You would die. You would panic. You might pass out. I don't know. You might do something because you don't want to do that. For all of us, there is a moment some of us maybe are more comfortable on stage and others, maybe more public than others, but we all have to face this crossroads of being a public Christian. It takes thoughtfulness. It's not flipping. There's an accountability. Once you say it's out there, people hear it and you're held accountable to it. And so this is important. So this word acknowledge that's here in the original Greek means to confess, to trust in, this is more than just using your mouth to say, yeah, I'm a Christian. Yeah, I believe in Jesus. Yeah, I love Jesus. But it's confession that Jesus is Messiah. And there's a sense to it too, again, more than just the hollow words, but there's an allegiance. There's a loyalty. This is my Jesus. I am his, that's the acknowledgement. So your faith then comes to this crossroad to say this publicly makes us nervous. It makes this waiver sometimes because we have the fear of man, we want to be man pleasing, possibly of the crossroads or the other option. Do I want to please God? Do I want to fear God? Do I want to be God pleasing? All of those, so we come to that crossroads, which loyalty will win the day? Your loyalty to man, your loyalty to Jesus. Romans 1:16. Paul says it this way, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it the power of salvation, first to the Jew, then to the Greek." That's everybody, Jews and Greeks, even though you, I'm not Greek, you're not a Jew, that's encompassing everybody. There's only one savior. And that's why we're not ashamed of this because it's the most important thing.

We have one savior, his name is Jesus. Why would we be ashamed of that? He's the power to save. He's the only power to save. And so we're not ashamed. And yet I think of times when I was in class, high school and college, maybe among peers sometimes or strangers that my knees would buckle, that my faith might waiver, that I would get timid as the issue of faith came about, the issue of what do you believe come about? There was the pause of, do I say it? Do I confess it? Do I acknowledge that I'm a Christian? I don't want to be disowned. I don't want to be laughed at, I don't want to be mocked. I don't want to be called one of those. I don't want to be disassociated with. So what do I do? And so we waiver, we're fearful. Does the fear of man control you?

Proverbs tells us that the fear of man is a snare, mean it's a trap, it's a trick, it causes us to trip up. Last week, Pastor Jeremiah did an amazing job talking about walking worthy from Philippians chapter one versus 27 and 28. He talked about walking worthy that we stand firm in our doctrine, that we strive side by side together and specifically said, do not get frightened. He gave a great illustration, frightened by opponents. That word for frightened literally means to be spooked, like a horse that's been spooked. It's a horse that's on the trail and it sees a snake, a rattlesnake or something and it jumps up and it runs away. We're not to be afraid and frightened like that by opponents. And what's the key there in this, is it's side by side. Jesus is talking to the disciples collectively, they're individuals, yes, but they're together. Don't be afraid. Don't be man pleasers. Paul says in Philippians, strive side by side and not being frightened by opponents. And one of the reasons that we gather together on Saturday nights or Sundays is that weekly reminder of gathering that you're not alone. You're a part of God's family. And God's family is behind you and you're behind it. You're helping each other and encouraging each other to face the week

ahead as you face a world that's hostile to who you are and what you believe so that you can be a bold witness wherever you are and wherever God has you. We gather to be reminded of that, that you're not alone.

Now, this confession also has a flip side, denial, acknowledgement or denial. But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my father who's in heaven. Those are sobering words. It's reciprocal, denial is to disown, to reject. This passage used to be a proof text, or maybe still is in some circles of walking an aisle, to come forward, to receive Christ. And you have to walk an aisle because that's your public confession. Now there's plenty of people that have walked an aisle that haven't truly been saved. It's just walking an aisle, there's nothing magical to walking an aisle. And this isn't what this means. This isn't a one-time instance. This word acknowledgement is a settled course. It's a consistent confession meaning that its ongoing, it's not a onetime acknowledgement that Jesus is your savior.

We get a snapshot of this with Peter. Peter is a famous failure in this area, right? Jesus predicted to him said, "Peter, you're going to deny me three times." That was the night before Jesus was crucified. And what did Peter say? No way, I will stand with you because we're really bold in the back room, aren't we? And then we get to the stage and things change. And that's what happened. They arrest Jesus and there's Peter, he cuts off a guy's ear. That's about as bold as he got. And then after that they kept pressing him, hey, you knew him. No, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know him. He did that three times, and one night, the night before Christ is betrayed, he had been following Christ for three years. What happened? That rooster crowed and he wept because he realized what had happened.

But then something happens in just 60 days, there's Peter in Solomon's Portico at the temple in Jerusalem with thousands of people there proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ even to those who gave the guilty verdict to Jesus. And what happened? 3000 men received Christ, put their faith in Jesus that day. What happened in 60 days? Well, Jesus went to the cross the next day. He rose three days after that, he ascended, he sent the Holy Spirit and there's Peter professing to all who Jesus is and was. You see, this isn't about a one-time proclamation per se, but we see a transformation because we believe in a risen savior. Here we are in the same paradigm. We're United with Christ. We have the spirit dwelling within us. We have every reason and every ability to be bold because of what Christ has given us.

It's not about a temporary lapse because of fear. It's about a pattern of life, not the perfection of life. If you've blown it, maybe you've blown it this last week. Maybe you've blown it today. When it comes to boldly being who you are in Christ, confess it, receive forgiveness for it and be ready for the next opportunity because there's the next opportunity coming. And another one, and another one, and another one, and Peter himself says in first Peter 3:14, be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have. And his plan for is quite simple, it's not now go get an apologetics degree, though that's good and apologetics are great. He says, set apart Christ as Lord so that you may be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have. You're not ashamed of the one who has saved you. So you are ready to publicly obviously unashamedly be a Christian, that's number one, to acknowledge Jesus publicly is a response to the radical call of following Christ.

The second one, it gets worse. You thought the public thing made you nervous. Look at the **second one, follow Jesus sacrificially**. Jesus raises the bar on each one of these four principles we're going to look at. And here he is preparing expectations to his disciples of what this is going to be like. And he raises the ante for it. He is clear, in verses 34, he says, three times I have come. He tells you why he came, not just here, this is not exhaustive, other places as well, but he

cuts straight. I have come, we get his intentionality. The centrality of what's taking place and his mission on planet earth. And he says this, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Wait a minute, what? He says, he's correcting their thinking. Do not think, meaning you may have thought this, but it's not true. I have not come to bring peace, but I've come to bring a sword. Pastor, it's only July and you're already ruining Christmas. Didn't we read in Luke chapter two versus eight through 13, the angels course, peace on earth, goodwill to men to with whom God is pleased. That was peace, right? That's why he came, peace, right? John 14:27, Jesus says to his disciples, "My peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you." It was prophesied about him in Isaiah chapter nine, he is the prince of peace. Yeah, you got it. So what's taken place here? And what the angel said and what Jesus said, what Isaiah prophesied about, each of those statements in referring to peace there is talking about peace with God.

That's what Jesus has come to do. There's a gap between a holy God and an unholy people. And Jesus fills that gap and makes peace. It is with him, peace comes. Not only that, but God also bestows on us peace. We go through trials, we go through difficulties. Philippians four tells us, when you're anxious, pray, and what happens, what's a blessing from that? The peace that passes understanding. Some of you experience that, and you know that, you pray, you cry out to God. The circumstances don't change, but God rests on you and you have a peace. So then peace with God and peace from God. So then you receive these things. This peace with God in turn, then creates opposition from others.

Peace with God creates opposition with others. Spurgeon says it this way. Charles Spurgeon, great British pastor of the mid 1800s, the late 1800s. He says this, "Truth, provokes opposition, purity excites enmity and righteousness arouses all the forces of wrong." So in other words, to align oneself with Jesus, creates a division and attention with others. There's a sacrifice. You're going to follow Jesus, you're going to lose something. You're going to lose a lot of things. And some of that may be the most valuable, important relationships in your life. That is potentially the greatest sacrifice that's made in this sense and that's what Jesus is referring to here. It costs you something to follow him, something dear to you. He says, it's like a sword, that's a war term, it's unsettling. Now Paul says and reminds us if possible, so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all, don't go looking to start a fight, it's just going to find you. You claim to be a Christian and follow Christ. It'll come for you. You just say I'm a Christian, people who formerly loved you or loved you a minute before that now are questioning their love for you, potentially. Maybe you've experienced that. He says it here in verse 35 and 36, for I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against your mother and a daughter-in-law against your mother-in-law and a person's enemies will be those of his own household. This hits home literally. It could cost you peaceful relationship with your family to follow Jesus, that word set or turn a man against, the English fails to convey the weight of what is actually said there.

It means the incitement to revolt and the rejection of authority to sow discord. In other words, your family could see you as treasonous, enmity, in places today and throughout history, a wife or a child comes to faith in Christ. It could mean their life. Places like Afghanistan, Iran, other places like that, they could be executed, killed even by their own father or husband. For us, it's more than just tension at Thanksgiving meal. It can be real, and for many of you, I was blessed to be able to be born into a Christian family. Some of you, many of you have had that, but many of you have had the opposite experience as well. Your family disowned you, they cut you off. They think you're that crazy one. And so it's hard, it hurts. Has your faith in Christ cost you anything? Has it cost you any relationships? Know this, that if it does, Christ is there, he will never leave you. He offers, you may lose your family, but a hundred-fold, you may receive a greater family,

a church family. It hurts, but it's compensation is amazing. A true disciple understands what is at stake. It's Jesus and everything else, that's to follow Jesus sacrificially.

It gets worse. It's really getting better. **#3) love Jesus supremely.** You acknowledge Jesus publicly. You follow Jesus sacrificially. You love Jesus supremely. What a great command. Here's what Jesus says, "Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." This test moves beyond the potential hostility, and enmity of the passive kind of merely just being a Christian and how some might receive that to then an active aspect, the actively love to actively love Christ more than those dearest to you. In verses 34 through 36, the family disowns the believer. In verse 37, the believer elevates Jesus over family. This really gets to the heart of the test. Are you really a follower of him? This will show itself because no one will be more important in your life, and it's described as love, it doesn't say, just make Jesus first. Just treat him better or more. It's love, it's love. God's word is clear. We're to love our family. We're to love our church family. In fact, we're even to love our enemies, but Jesus must be the supreme love of our life or all those other things will not be as they should.

We can see this in a variety of ways, how this subtly might come into a believer's life, where they take something good, something that's a gift from God and let it become greater than the giver. One of the ways I've seen this is the blessings of social media, Facebook, you have the goods and the bads with it. One of the goods as a pastor of shepherds, might be on a Sunday. And I think, oh, where's the Smith family? I didn't see them. And then later in the day I look at Facebook and that they are, we decided to have a family day today and go to the beach. Now you don't have beaches here. You have sand with no water. We have beaches on in California, is one of the few good things we left behind, but that's okay. And so we go, oh, how great, a family day. Oh, okay then that's fine. It's a family day, you can skip church because it's a family day. No, is it about the legality of, oh you got to be at church every Sunday and we're going to check that and we're going to find out, no. Why do we come? We come to worship Christ. We come to encourage one another. We come to sing about his greatness. We come to give and to serve and to remind ourselves of the gospel and rehearse the gospel. That's why we come. That is God's gracious provision in your life to prepare you for the week. Family days are great, there's six and a half days of those.

He knows what's best for you, and if you prioritize your life around him, everything else will fall into place. And that's sometimes lost because it sounds so good, a family day, who's going to argue with that? Scriptures do, let your family day, come you can leave at one and go have the rest of the day as the family day. But you set it aside, God provides. My wife, I don't want my wife to love me more than Jesus. Two key reasons. I'm a terrible savior, and two I'm an even worse God. She needs both of those more than me. And when He's in the right place, everything else flows from that. Same thing for me, when Christ is in his right place, I'm a better father, I'm a better husband, I'm a better pastor. So what Jesus is saying here is not some sort of narcissistic command to himself, but he's offering the best thing in the universe. Love the best thing, the best thing is me. Love those other things too, but make sure they fall in their right place. Reorient your life around that. Christian, is there anything more valuable or worth more to you than your love of him? May it not be so.

That leads to number four. This is the apex, **#4) to follow Jesus decisively.** We acknowledge Jesus publicly, we follow Jesus sacrificially. We love Jesus supremely and we follow Jesus decisively. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever

finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life from my sake, will find it. It's crystal clear. This is the tip of the spire of your life. And Jesus uses a precise word picture to his audience and to us, take your cross, and like acknowledge, it's not a one-time taking, it's an ongoing taking, it is the pattern of your life to take your cross. In Luke, he says, take your cross daily. It's another message for another day, but here it is. It's ongoing. Now what's interesting about this place right here in Matthew 10. It isn't until Matthew's 16 that Jesus mentions his own cross, here he just says, take your cross and follow me. There he says, as I take my cross, you take your cross too. And he makes reference to his own death and resurrection. We have the benefit of the view of where we are in 2022. We know the full picture. We've known it for 2000 years. We've seen it. We know what happens. Jesus goes to his cross, he rises from the dead, he ascends. We know all of that. We see the picture of what his cross look like. We see his sacrifices. And so that gives us a clear picture. But imagine being these 12 at that moment in time, and here's Jesus saying, take your cross and follow me.

What would they have been thinking? What does that mean to them at that moment? Well, not too far different than what we've seen. We see the details of it, but they would've understood the consequences that Jesus was putting before them. Listen to what John MacArthur says in his commentary, "The cross symbolized the extremes of both excruciating pain and heartless cruelty, but above all it symbolized death. Only a few years before Jesus spoke those words, a zealot named Judas had gathered together a band of rebels to fight the Roman occupation forces. The insurrection was easily quelled. And in order to teach the Jews a lesson, the Roman general Varus ordered the crucifixion of over 2000 Jews. Their crosses line the roads of Galilee from one end to the other." Can you imagine that picture? If you saw that you would never forget it. Imagine families going down the road from town to town, having to cover the eyes of the children for a mile or more because of those crosses, it was meant to send a sign, don't mess with Rome. That's what it will be like.

So you have this picture in mind that many of them may have actually even seen. It was very predominant. So if they didn't see that they saw crucifixion at some point in the Roman empire. Another commentator says it this way, "crucifixion was a form of execution for slaves and political rebels. It also carried the stigma of social disgrace when applied to a free person, it was a savage death and a public disgrace. To take up the cross, that was something that was reserved for slaves, rebels, and traitors." So in this sense, Jesus was saying, I want you to follow another kingdom, and that's the message. His kingdom come, that's the prayer in Matthew six. Later in Matthew six, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness."

This is about which kingdom, we're in two kingdoms. We're in the kingdom of America and the kingdom of Arizona. And we're to be good citizens of that. But primarily, and foremostly, we are kingdoms. We are part of the kingdom of the cross, of our savior, and that's our allegiance, that's our ultimate allegiance. Jesus expands on this understanding too of the cross and makes it applicable. He talks of it as a euphemism for self-denial. Says verse 39, whoever finds his life, will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. If you want to find your life, here's the irony. You got to lose it. And who do you lose it to? You'll lose it to Jesus. If you want to find it, meaning you reject Jesus and you're going to do it your own way or another way, you will lose it. How kind of him to let us know, how gracious to let us know? In a self-obsessed world, this is radical. You do you, you've got to be obsessed with self-care. You've got to have some me time. In fact, that kind of infects the church a little bit too. Well, Jesus did that. He went off to the wilderness. Yeah, he wasn't having a salon day and aromatherapy or a massage or

whatever, he was going to refuel for the fight. That's what he was doing. This is outrageous, counterintuitive.

D.A Carson raises the anti too a little bit here in what he says, he says, "Taking of one's cross does not mean putting up with some awkward or tragic situation in one's life." Those are real, they're suffering. God uses suffering in our life. Taking across is a type of suffering, but it's more specific than that. Taking one's cross does not mean putting up with some awkward or tragic situation in one's life, but painfully dying to self, and notice the words there, for my sake, Jesus says, it's for Christ's sake that we take up our cross. So it's those moments where it's either this or Christ. We take our cross, it's not, we don't bear cross, oh, I had such a bad day, it's just my cross to bear. Oh, I hit every yellow light on the way to church today, it was just my cross to bear. Oh, my kids are crying all the time. It's my cross to bear. I got an 89 on a test this last week, it's my cross to bear. You get it? Little sarcasm there. And that's something you even say, it's my spouse, it's my cross to bear. Now that's not the case. There are marriages, and maybe you're in a marriage where your marriage is difficult. Your spouse is not the cross, the cross is then despite your spouse's actions, you take up your cross, you do what God calls you to do as a godly spouse, regardless of how your spouse acts. But your spouse is not your cross. That's the difference in seeing it, and the view of seeing how the cross might be.

You reorient your life around what Jesus calls you to do. His priorities become your priorities. His thinking becomes your thinking. His way becomes your way. That's the fight that we have. That's why it's symbolized in a cross because it's not easy. In fact, it's impossible without Jesus in your life. That's why this isn't a step to get Jesus. It's a step that you're to take the rest of your life once you have him, because without him, you can't do this. And that's good news. You see, it hurts because you'll be swimming upstream against the Niagara Falls of the flesh, the devil and the world, because all of those things want you to do anything and everything that's opposite of what God wants you to do. You see, here's another aspect too that's good news. The cross is not the end goal. It leads somewhere, it's a temporary taking, it's for your whole life, but it's just for your life here. It leads to life. It's decisive to draw the line in the sand and say, I take my cross. I remember in 1985 being at summer camp between my junior and senior year, being a Christian. I don't remember a time not believing in Jesus, grew up in the church, liked the church, never rebelled, enjoyed going to church, liked Jesus, would even say I loved him, but I heard a message similar to this. And I was reminded and I heard and it bear it on my soul. Jesus wants all of you, not just parts, you can't be a half Christian. It's either all or nothing. And I realized that I was half at best. It was time to take up my cross and follow him as a believer. And you know what? Every loss has hurt along the way, but none have been regretted, because I have Jesus.

If you're a follower, then follow him and let your life be a cruciform life. And that looks like enduring persecution. It looks like publicly confessing your allegiance to Christ, facing tensions because of that allegiance, loving Jesus is above all else. That's the summary of taking up your cross here in this passage. There's one illustration that some give, give you the choice, the Christian's life is like the chicken or the pig. It's a funny illustration in that, what it means and how both help feed humans. The chicken gives eggs, the pig gives his life. So the answer is supposed to be, you're the pig. I know that's not very kind to say that, you're the pig. I would say no, you're the chicken because what the chicken does is he gives eggs, she gives eggs and then gives her life. It's the whole thing. Now, if that's not eloquent enough for you, I've got a different illustration, all right? And that comes from the Heidelberg confession. The question number one is this in the Heidelberg confession, what is thy only comfort in life and death. And the answer to that is that I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful

savior Jesus Christ. That's the picture that Jesus is painting here. This is actually what he's offering here is joy. In fact, it says for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross. All that he went through is encapsulated in that. Why? Because the cross was not the end goal. The cross was a means to the end. And it was huge because it secured our salvation, but he rose again.

He ascended to the father. We are United with him. He sent the spirit. That's the hope that we have in taking our cross is that the cross is not the end road, it is just a pathway to the end. And it stands in the face of what the world offers. And we're willing to suffer against what the world offers because there's something better to come. In acknowledging Jesus publicly, you may be rejected by the whole world for a time temporarily, but you'll have God eternally. What's better? Your family may disown you and that hurts to the core. But what you receive is Father God, who will never leave you nor forsake you. And you receive a family, a hundred-fold in fellow believers. What's better? No other love will compare to your love of Jesus. How could it? Why would it? Taking up our cross hurts, losing your life is counterintuitive to what the world offers, but it contradicts a world that's literally hell bent in offering a myriad of counterfeit hopes, blessings, than the true one, which is only in Christ.

James Montgomery Boice, famous preacher says it this way, "If Jesus is the Son of God, which he is, these are the most important words you will ever hear since your eternal destiny hangs on your acceptance or your rejection of them." So when Jesus says take up your cross, he means do so willingly. Christian, keep taking your cross. If you are not in Christ today, believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, repent, turn away from that sin, and take up your cross, come and die. Let's pray.

Jesus we are so grateful today that we can come to you and you give us the unvarnished truth, the unfiltered reality of the great blessing of life that you are so worth it, no matter what we go through and taking up our cross will be worth it because you are worth it. You're calling us to a life of joy and taking up our cross, because this is not all there is. And you want to authenticate for us and provide authentication of if we're truly a follower of yours or not. How kind that is so that we are not in mystery. I pray for Christians who are struggling today, that you would encourage them, help them carry that cross, without you there is no hope. And for those who are not in Christ today, Lord, I pray that you would move on their hearts, that they might put their faith in you and take up their cross and follow you, only you can grant that, and I pray you would today. We thank you and we love you. And it's in your name we pray, amen.