



Saint John United Methodist Church
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“Lay Down Your Life”
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Mark 8:27-38

Message for March 27, 2022

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul.

Do You Follow Jesus This Close?

I ran across a bumper sticker the other day that really caught my eye.

“Do you follow Jesus this close?”

It is a little snarky but makes its point. If you are so close to a car that you can read this, you are just a little too close. The bumper sticker also makes its point about having a relationship with Christ. In that regard, it’s more than okay to be close. There is no such thing as being too close.

Jesus wants us to be in relationship with him, above all else, and he goes to great lengths to make that possible

How Goes It with You?

These are the sort of things we consider during Lent.

- How goes it with your walk with Christ?
- How close are you following him?
- Is it your heart’s desire to be given over to him?

Hopefully, all through this grand season you are drawing closer and closer to Jesus.

A Tough Word

With the cross looming large, Jesus spoke plainly about what was about to take place.

He told his disciples that soon he would suffer, die, and on the third day rise from the dead. Jesus wanted to prepare his disciples for what was to come. What he shared was not easy for them to hear. The cross is always a challenge.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:18, *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us it is the power of God.”* (I Corinthians 1:18)

In the cross God provides the way for our salvation. We are so in need of what he offers. A loving, righteous judge who is never content with sin forgives that sin on account of what Jesus did on the cross. In the cross, we find displayed the greatest show of love that has ever been. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross paves the way for our forgiveness.

Evil is dealt a serious blow. Sin no longer has the same sway. God knew just what we needed in sending his Son, and the cross stands at the center of that.

Do As Jesus Did

We are to do as Jesus did.

Jesus says, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”* (Mark 8:34)

Are you following Jesus that close? The challenge is to lay down our lives as well.

Oswald Chambers in his book, *My Utmost for His Highest* talks in terms of *“giving up the right to yourself.”*

He talks about:

- Making yourself available to Christ.
- Leaving yourself at Christ’s disposal.
- Following him above all else.

A Matter of Sacrifice

We have all been inspired by the tremendous sacrifices offered by thousands and thousands of people in the Ukraine. They are willing to give their lives for the sake of their country.

Christ talks about living sacrificially for his sake and the sake of the gospel, and as we know there have been thousands and thousands who have done that down through the ages. *“Taking up your cross”* is always a matter of sacrifice.

“Following him” is not always easy. It wasn’t for the disciples, and it is not for us, yet doing so opens us to the sort of life Jesus wanted us to live all along.

Jesus says, *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul?”* In referencing the soul here, Jesus doesn’t just talk about this life, but the next as well.

Jesus is our living hope, now and forever more. *In his mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection from the dead.”* (I Peter 1:3)