

Sunday October 17, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Ross L)

Father, we want to come today to offer our praise to you. We need you to quieten our busy minds as we come humbly, struggling to understand the enormity of who you are and your love for us. We know Lord that you have always been here, the beginning and the end. Your creation reminds us that you are all powerful, that you hold the stars in your hands. You give us life and breath; you sustain us, pursue us and redeem us. You are the truth in a world full of lies, light in darkness, the giver of hope through grace. You offer us wisdom, comfort and healing through your overwhelming love.

We come today to claim forgiveness, forgiveness that we don't deserve. We allow ourselves to be pulled away from the truth that you have given us. We stray in so many directions and fail to stop and remember you. We forget that you are eternal, and focus instead on the here and now. We are sorry for not doing what we should do, for allowing our pride, self-centredness and sinful nature to guide the way we live.

And yet, in spite of all this, you continue to love us as you always have. Help us to remember that this morning and open our hearts and minds to your leading. Amen

Song – Praise to the Lord

1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near,
Join me in glad adoration.

2. Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

3. Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee!
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do
If with His love He befriend thee.

4. Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the amen sound from His people again;
Gladly forever adore Him.

Bible Reading – Mark 8:27-30 (NIV)

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Announcements for 17th October

Focus for the month – Generosity. If God has been generous to us, how might we be generous back to God and allow his generosity to flow through us to others? How can we be generous in the use of our home, our car, our possessions? Can we share them to others? Can we lend them to others? Can we give them to others? If everything we have has been given to us by God in trust, then what we have is not our own, but his to share. How does this truth affect how generous we are to others?

The Generosity Project. Most of our small groups are studying a book this term about how we can be more generous with all that God has given us. If you would like to join others and think through this vital teaching in a small group setting, just see Jon or Stephan and they can direct you to a group that is doing these studies. It is in this context that we have also launched our pledge campaign.

Pledges for our future ministry facilities. This month our Church launched an anonymous pledge campaign to help upgrade our Ministry Facilities at Charlestown. We have asked all our regular attendees to consider how they might be able to make a contribution that will impact the growth of our Church and our ability to tell unbelievers about Jesus both now and into the future. The ideal thing would be for every one of us to consider what pledge either big or small that they would like to make and to fill in the pledge form either online or send to the Church. If everyone could please do this by NEXT Sunday 24th October. See attached pledge form!

Opening Up. Our plan is to begin our physical Church services when our state reaches the 80% double vaccination target, most likely on Sunday 31st October. At this point everyone would be able to come to Church. Please prayerfully consider coming to Church as soon as you possibly can. Video and livestream services have been the best replacement we could possible do as a Church but it is not the same as physically coming to Church.

Prayer. Please notice that during this critical time we are running our prayer group via ZOOM each Week on Mondays @ 7:30pm. All welcome. We really want to be trusting in the Lord at this critical time in our state's history.

Getting together. We are also planning a few social/community events when things open up. Pizza after Sunday @ 6 Church on 31st October, picnic lunch for all on Sunday 7th November & a welcome back carols event on Saturday 4th December, more details to come

Keeping in Touch. Is there someone you could ring today to see how they are going? Maybe someone that you haven't spoken to for last few months?

Christmas Boxes for Operation Christmas Child. If you still would like to support Operation Christmas Child (OCC) you still can until the end of the month. But you will need to do it via the OCC website or by dropping the boxes into Koorong. Call Kathryn O'Callaghan on 0424 428 722 for more details.

Giving. If you would like to support the work of the Church, the best way is to make a deposit in our Church Bank Account. (Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian Church BSB 062 829, Number 1019 4850) No need to tell us who you are, better if it is anonymous! But do let us know whether you are attached to Swansea or Charlestown.

Wedding. Please keep Ryan and Shannon in your prayers as they prepare to get married this Saturday.

Song – hear Our Prayer

1. Hear our prayer, God above
As we come to you and seek your patient love
Hear our hearts, hear our minds
Hear the echoes of the words we cannot find

2. Be our hope, be our guide
In our wanderings of weakness break our pride
Not for ease shall we pray
But for strength that we may walk with you this day

Chorus

So we pray in faith, your will be done
 As we long to see your kingdom come
 We ask with one voice
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord

3. Hear our prayer, faithful one
 Shape our yearnings to the gospel of your Son
 Free our hearts, free our minds
 From the war that sin will wage till you arrive

4. Be our joy, be our stay
 Give us eyes to see you answer prayer this day
 Hear us praise all you've done

Family Matters (God's Generosity).

Describe a time when someone was generous to you.

Generosity, for me, has usually been shown through hospitality and inclusion. When we moved to a small country town, knowing no-one, one family; Mum, Dad and 5 kids, showed us extraordinary generosity. We were invited and welcomed into their lives, sharing in simple family meals, family times, and in so doing, they opened themselves up to us, whatever we might think. Their generosity of spirit offered us warmth and belonging as they showed an interest in us and revealed themselves. They were openly Christian and this was our first experience of such a lifestyle. (Robynne W)

"In 2011, I started to malfunction badly. I had developed terrible anxiety and depression that meant I needed a lot of help from others. I had so many people that were generous to me, but I wanted to mention three things. First, our church was incredibly generous to me in the way that they accepted me with open arms, and it meant so much to me to go from being a pastor caring for others at Swansea, to being cared for as part of the congregation at Charlestown. It is a big adjustment, and I thought about changing churches, but I talked to our previous senior pastor, John Seaton, and he encouraged me that he thought I could stick around and that our church would be able to care for me, and so many people rose to the challenge. Some of the ways people were generous to me was also in being kind to my wife, Kerry, and my kids, like Alan Wright and Stuart Blanch who helped my older son Harry at several points, and Cheryl Gillard, Kaylene Taylor and Karen Logan who have cared for Jannah in different ways. The second mention I want to make is that the care of our church has come in a more focused way through the weekly men's group who have listened to me, loved me, encouraged me to become like Jesus, and prayed for me. Those guys have been a rock to me. Third, I had a friend Peter who got me into windsurfing, and it was as much about the windsurfing as it was about the conversation, the comradery, the inclusion and the acceptance" (Mike P)

"Was actually the whole Church when Dad was in hospital. Everyone was looking out for us and doing things like giving us lifts, sending us food, asking us how we were or sitting with us in the hospitable and that was definitely one of the biggest moments where someone has been generous to us & my family.

How did that act of generosity affect you?

"As time went on and our friendship developed, the Mum (Dell), in telling me of her upcoming commitments, said she would soon be doing a course. "What course?" said I, interested and enthusiastic. "Christianity Explained" she said. "Oh I should do that!" were the words that came out of my mouth. She took me under her wing, and between week 2 (The Cross) and week 3 (The resurrection), I was reborn. Soon after, my husband became a Christian also. So, generosity affected me in the biggest and most significant of ways. Praise God." (Robynne)

At many times I had no confidence, but the love of these brothers and sisters in Christ has helped me to feel valued and loved. God has used these people to help me know and feel his care, that I was his child, and that nothing else mattered. In all of these situations, Christians loved me in a way that was remarkable and ongoing, and that made me feel like I was valued as a person, even when the world was spinning around me. It helped me to feel included when my brain kept telling me I didn't belong anywhere. It helped me to feel loved when my mind was telling me I was worthless. I used to try to teach people about God's love, but so many people have taught me about God's love, and inspired me to love and care for others." (Mike P)

"By all the little things that our church family did at that time for us it really, really made us feel special and loved and cared for and especially as we really didn't know we need that sort of stuff and it made me feel so loved and so taken care and God really put the right people in our lives at that time." (Sofia)

Pastoral Prayer (Jo Barlow)

Our great Father in heaven, we thank and praise You that throughout the Old Testament, we see the prophecies of Your Messiah who was to come, and those promises were fulfilled in the coming of Your Son Jesus. Yet the Messiah was not a triumphant war-like conqueror but a suffering servant who was to die on behalf of his followers. We thank You that Jesus was willing to do this as our substitute, and ask that we too would be willing to take up our cross to follow Him. Thank You that He has gone before us, has opened the way to the Holy of Holies and is now seated at Your right hand. Thank You that because He was tempted as we are, He helps us face our trials and temptations.

Lord, we bring before you our government at all different levels, Federal, State and local council. We particularly pray for Dominic Perottet in his new role as premier, that you would equip him to serve the people of Australia selflessly. We pray for wisdom for all politicians as they make important decisions on our behalf, and ask that they would truly consider the needs of their constituents before their own ambitions. Particularly as our state begins to open up, we pray that the spread of Covid would be contained so that hospitals are not overwhelmed.

Thank you for the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church this week, and for their priority of maintaining the unity within our church and not excluding some. We pray that you would give wisdom to the pastors and church leaders in all churches, and our church in Charlestown and Swansea in particular, in knowing how and when to open up so that every person may be included. We ask that as we return, we would have a greater hunger for Your Word and knowing You, and never again take for granted the privilege and blessing of meeting together.

Lord, for those believers who have drifted away because of the lack of gatherings, we ask that You would have mercy on them, and strengthen them in their faith. May other believers encourage them to continue to run the race and persevere despite the obstacles. Help each of us to encourage our brothers and sisters who are struggling, knowing we are all part of the one body.

Father, we pray for those who are not coping because of mental illness and the huge stressors that this pandemic has brought in so many areas of their lives. Lord, please comfort them, and enable them to keep going. We bring before you our brother Josh Montzka and ask that he would know your presence and enabling in his times of loneliness and feeling down. For our HSC students, please help them to press on; give them good time management with sufficient rest, and help them trust in you for their exams and their futures.

We pray for our ministers, Stephen and Jon, and thank You for their service to You on our behalf. Lord, please strengthen and equip them for the tasks You have assigned them, and give them Your love for every person with whom they come into contact. Thank you for their godly example; help

them to look to You in every difficult or challenging situation in which they find themselves and trust You to be their sufficiency.

Father, we ask that You would help us to be willing to take up our cross as Jesus did, and be willing to die to self for Your sake, knowing that paradoxically, this enables us to have life to the full. Thank You for the satisfaction and fulfilment that obedience to You brings – help us to hunger and thirst for that righteousness. We ask all of these things in the strong name of Jesus, our Messiah and Redeemer, and for his sake. Amen.

Bible Reading – Mark 8:31-9:1 (NIV)

³¹ 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. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ 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." ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." ⁹ And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

Sermon – Who do you say I am? (Stephen T) <https://youtu.be/kDFB2gJpK2I>

I still remember as if it was yesterday, my first flatpack. It was a cot for Samuel. Well Samuel was yet to be born but we were setting up the baby's room and we bought this flatpack. And I was all at sea. The instructions were from China. The diagrams could be taken a number of ways. And it was just so complex.

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I spent a couple of hours in the room and what I was building didn't really look like a cot. So I dismantled it and started again. This time in front of the cricket. Bit by bit it finally came together. I got the base right, the sides right but I couldn't stop there because I need to get the bit that slid up and down right to make it easy to put the baby in and out of the cot.

Then finally I got that bit right but I still wasn't finished, imagine putting the baby onto the wooden base without a mattress. So, then we put the mattress and the mattress cover and it was done. Perfect. We were ready. Unfortunately, it now wouldn't fit into the bedroom, the cot was too wide for the doorway and so I had to pull it apart and start all over again.

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But I remembered this when I was reading our passage today. For when Jesus asks his disciples "Who do you say I am?" it wasn't enough for them to believe he was the Messiah. That's a good start but it is like just getting the base and the sides of the cot together. They needed to go further. They needed to know that this Messiah would die. He was not just a triumphant Messiah, a Christ, a King, he was also a suffering servant who would give his life as a ransom for many. But even that wasn't good enough.

They needed to go one step further, they needed to put in the mattress and the linen. They had to come to the point where they realised that this Messiah, who was going to die, was worth dying for. They needed to not just believe in the cross of Christ, they must take up the cross of Christ themselves.

That is what Mark 8 is all about. And that is what we need to understand as well. Yes, we need to confess that Jesus is the unique Saviour sent from God for this world. Yes, he will achieve that salvation by giving of himself and dying on the cross. But that's not enough, nowhere near enough. We need to be willing to die for this Saviour. We need to give our life and even our death to this Messiah. We are not just spectators. We are participants. And if we are following a crucified Messiah, we need to be willing to be crucified ourselves.

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So, can I ask you when was the last time you put your life on the line for Jesus? When was the last time you died to self in order to live for Him? When did you lastly make a sacrifice that not only hurt but it could have mortally wounded you? Many of us are happy to believe in Jesus. To even say we will follow Jesus. But are we willing to give up everything for Jesus? For he was willing to give up everything for you. For Jesus is

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1. The Messiah (verses 27-30)

“Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” Now our passage starts off with a question, a not unreasonable question. He has been with the people probably for two years now. He has taught, he has healed, he has cared, he has provided. So, the crowds of people that have flocked to him have seen many aspects of his character. So, who do people say I am?

And the answers are interesting ²⁸ *They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah & still others, one of the prophets.”* John the Baptist, a mighty figure who was to call God's people back to God. Elijah, the prophet who would come to prepare God's people for their Messiah. A prophet, someone who spoke the very words of God. All reasonable answers. All respected figures. All these answers say that Jesus is a good man, a very great man indeed.

But they are all the entree and none of them is the main meal. For all the options, John the Baptist, Elijah and the prophet, are preparatory. None of them is the real thing. So no one among the crowds has guessed the true nature of Jesus. No-one has seen that he is in fact the Messiah, the promised king, the one who would bring in the Kingdom of God.

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You see there are times, you see, when a compliment is not a compliment. If you and I were to go the local park & were to see Steve Smith batting in the nets and after watching him for a little while you were to say to him, “Your pretty good, you should try out for Valentine first grade, you might just make it.” I doubt that Smith would take that as a complement. This is one of the best batsmen in the world. Your compliment has missed the mark by a long way.

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So then Jesus turns up the heat in the kitchen a little more. Forget about them, who do you say that I am? Now this is not just an armchair discussion, the disciples themselves are now in the hot seat. They are being asked a critical question, maybe the most important question of all. Who do you say Jesus is? On which side are you going to land?

Peter who never liked those awkward silences, jumps in with both feet and says, “You are the Christ.” You are the king. You are the one that God promised who would bring us back to Himself. You are the one that God's people have been waiting for who will overthrow God's enemies and establish the kingdom of God here on earth. Yes, up until this point the disciples don't seem to understand, they still are spiritual blind. But the light is now on. The scales are falling off their eyes. Peter, seems to have finally grasped the truth.

But he is told to keep quiet, at least for now. ³⁰ *“Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.”* For to announce him as a messiah might cause a political uprising. Might start a nationalistic bushfire. And being

the Messiah might seem like a complement, it might even be true, but it is not the whole truth. It might be a foundational truth but it isn't the whole picture. The disciples might have put the frame of the cot together but it is not yet ready for the baby. Yes, Jesus is the Messiah but he is more than that, much more than that.

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2. He is the Messiah who dies (verse 31-33)

³¹ *“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.”*

Jesus speaks plainly about the Messiah. He will not be the triumphant king who will kick out the Romans & give the Israelites the place in the sun that they always wanted. He will not as the Jews today believe, be a successful king that will push back the border of the Jewish nation bringing peace to the region and making the people of Israel top dogs once again. He will be a King who will suffer, who will die but who will come back to life after three days.

For the Son of God “must suffer”. He must suffer. There is a divine compulsion, there is a divine necessity to the Son of Man's suffering. He begins to teach them, that the only way that God can gather His people to Himself, the only way that redemption can be bought and purchased is by the death of the Son of Man figure; is that Jesus the Christ, God's chosen Messiah, God's very own Son, would suffer and be rejected, must be killed and rise again.

Now that's ridiculous, isn't it? The King, the great king that the Israelites have waited for almost a thousand years, the one who would take over where King David and King Solomon were, the high point of Jewish history, is actually coming to suffer? To die? Kings rule they don't die. The Messiah's glory comes through power not through suffering, surely?

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And so once again Peter jumps in boots and all, he takes Jesus *“aside and began to rebuke him.”* ³³ *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.”*

These are the harshest words Jesus ever said to his disciples. Peter is not just misinformed but has been influenced by God's enemy, Satan. You see Satan is using Peter to tempt Jesus not to go to the cross. But God's will for his Messiah is service & sacrifice. The things of God are the opposite to the things of man. The way of God is contrary to the ways of man.

One minute Peter is led by God to confess his faith in Jesus and the very next minute he is thinking like an unbeliever and is expressing the thoughts of Satan. One moment he is a rock and the next moment he is a stumbling block. For it is Satan who wants to blind us to the truth of the gospel. It is Satan who wants us to misunderstand who Jesus really is. Satan is sitting on Peter's shoulder. And Satan is powerful enough to change our thinking. But God is even more powerful and so Jesus will use this incident to teach and to inform and help Peter and us to join the dots together to find a fuller picture of exactly who Jesus is.

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For just as Jesus has just healed a blind man in stages in Mark 8:22-25, so often we only understand who Jesus is in stages as well. We don't get it all at once. Like a cot we need to put things together piece by piece. But this incident reminds us that Satan is always in the background. Spreading lies. Planting mistruths. Mudding the waters. Questioning God's word. No, Jesus goes on to say, if I am the Messiah who will die then, I am also

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3. The Messiah worth dying for (verses 34-38)

As Matthew Henry says, *“Christ having shown His disciples that He must suffer, and that He was ready and willing to do so, now begins to show them that they must suffer too and must be ready and willing to do so.”*

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³⁴ *“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said:”* Now this is important. The fact that Jesus calls the crowd means he is now talking to all those who will be followers not just the leaders. For there is only one standard of Christian discipleship. There is only one way to respond to a Messiah who is willing to suffer and to die. And that is the follower of that messiah must be also willing to suffer and die. *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”*

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These are tough words but words we need to take to heart. In the early days of WW2, when Winston Churchill took over the leadership of England, all that he offered his people was *“blood, sweat & tears.”* During the siege of Rome in 1849, Garibaldi, the great Italian patriot, made this famous proclamation: *“Soldiers, all our efforts against superior forces have been unavailing. I have nothing to offer you but hunger & thirst, hardship & death. But I call on all who love their country to join with me.”*

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But Jesus goes one step further. He says if we want to be his disciple, we must deny ourselves. Say no to making ourselves the centre of our lives. Say no to self-serving, self-advancement, self-satisfaction. We put to death the idol of self. We treasure and value Jesus more than ourselves. We submit to Jesus, we serve others, we now want to do God’s will.

Nothing could be more radical for an Australian living today. For we are constantly told to look after number 1, to believe in ourselves, for we are worth it. And so, when we are making our decisions, we ask ourselves what is the best thing for my health, for my wealth, for my family, for my future? But Jesus didn’t think like that did he? He denied himself, he left the comforts of heaven, he humbled himself and became a man, even dying on a cross, for us. So he is not asking us to do anything he wasn’t willing to do himself.

We are to deny ourselves and then take up the cross. If there was a cross in Jesus’ future, then there will also be a cross in our future. Executioners in Jesus day forced the criminal to carry their cross on the way to their execution. Therefore, to take up one’s cross was to die to our own agenda. Not just think about what God would want me to do. Not just do what God wants me to do for a period of time, a season of my life perhaps. But to be willing to take the path of rejection, of ridicule, of persecution, of self-sacrifice, even of martyrdom. Jesus disciples are willing to march toward their death every day of their lives.

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Now when I think the term death march, I think of the Sandakan death marches. Where allied troops, help captive by the Japanese were forced to hike hundreds of kilometres from Sandakan in Borneo to Ranau. There were over 2500 POW’s that started the march and only 6 survived. That is what Jesus is calling us to do today. To take up the cross daily.

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Now what exactly is our cross? I don’t think it is some of the people that God might place around us. Nor is it a trial or hardship or an illness. A cross is a difficulty that we are enduring for Christ’s sake. It comes about from going to a school or uni where the sexual ethics are different from what Jesus lays down. It comes from working in a firm whose business ways go contrary to the way that Jesus would want us to work. It comes when our conduct in following Jesus makes us stand out from our friends & become the odd one out in our family. Carrying the cross is never easy. But as Thomas Aquinas once said *“If you will bear the cross, the cross will bear you.”* (Repeat)

Now there was once a man complaining about the cross that he had to bear, so an angel ushered him up to heaven and took him into a room filled with crosses. The angel told the man, set your cross down and pick out another. The man looked and looked, some were large, some were splintery, and he looked and looked and finally picked the one that looked easiest to bear. The angel said, "That is the one that you brought in."

The cross we bear is not above our ability, or I should say, God's ability to help us to bear it. But it is difficult. It is far from easy. But Jesus carried the cross for us and continues to help us carry our own crosses as well.

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Deny yourself, take up the cross and follow me. This is a game of follow the leader. Wherever Jesus went, we go. When he stopped, we stop. We don't just go where we want to go. We don't just follow the crowd. We follow the road less travelled, because it is the road of self-denial, it is the road toward the cross, it is the road that Jesus is already on.

Following Jesus is risky and dangerous. It requires courage and sacrifice. We no longer play it safe. We no longer ask ourselves what is it that I really want. What path will make me more secure. What is everyone else around me doing? Because Jesus is the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through him.

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³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

We need to sit down and do a cost benefit analysis. What is of real value? What is of everlasting value? What use is it to become rich when I can lose it all? How short term is my thinking when I can't give something up today to gain something even more for all eternity. So it is a question for us to regularly ask ourselves. Is what I am doing a waste of my life? Is what I am doing the best investment for my eternal future?

But notice that we lose our lives for Jesus **and for the gospel**. At this time Jesus was in the disciple's midst and they were literally following him wherever he went. But after he dies & rises again our loyalty is not just to Jesus but the gospel of the Lord Jesus as well. We are to proclaim & live out the gospel in everything we do. The first disciples were willing to lose their lives for Jesus. We should be willing to lose our lives for the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

For it is the pearl of great price. It is the treasure hidden in the field. It is worth selling everything in order to obtain the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is worth living for, it is worth dying for. Even if it means losing the whole world.

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One man who was pretty close to having the whole world was the seventh century king, Charlemagne, the emperor of the so-called Holy Roman Empire. When he died, he was buried with great fanfare. A special tomb was prepared, he was seated in his royal robes, with his royal crown on his head, a royal staff on his hand and the royal Bible on his lap.

History tells us that about two hundred years after his death, another emperor by the name of Otho, went to look inside his tomb to see the way in which they had buried this great and important King. And they discovered that Charlemagne robes had almost disintegrated, the crown had fallen off his head, his staff was on the floor but the Bible was still open on his lap and his bony finger pointed to this text, the very text, that is before us today. *"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses*

his own soul?" For Charlemagne had it all but he lost it all. Because he didn't have Jesus. And so Jesus ends with this warning.

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³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." There are eternal implications. Each one of us will be judged on the last day but not on whether we believed that Jesus was the Messiah, or if we trusted in a Messiah who died for us but whether that faith caused us to follow a Messiah that is worth living for, worth suffering for and even worth dying for.

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C. S. Lewis puts it this way, *"Christ says: give me all. I don't want only so much of your time or money or work, I want you. No half-measures are good enough. Hand over the whole self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as theories you think wicked--the whole outfit. And I will give you a new self instead..."*

This is the radical call that Jesus places on all those who call themselves Christians. That is the radical call that God's word is placing on us today. And it is not easy. But in the words of Jim Elliot, *"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."*

Slide 22

I was quite taken by all the programmes remembering the 20th anniversary of September 11. But I was most taken by Tim Keller preaching at Redeemer Church, New York five days after the twin towers came down, when he said to the Christians present, *"Don't leave."* We will have many hard days ahead. Many of us will lose our jobs, we will want to run away and escape New York, but don't leave. God has placed us here. So, embrace this city and do it for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So can I channel Keller this morning and say to you take up your cross today in Newcastle. It will be tough to be a Christian in the days to come. You will want to look prioritise your own health, your family's safety and your own financial security. But God has placed you in this church and this neighbourhood at this time for a reason. Embrace this COVID crisis. Love those who think differently to you. Serve the Lord gladly in these difficult times. Take up your cross & follow Jesus. And do it all for the glory of God & the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Slide 23

The Danish theologian and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once said, *"I went into church and sat on the velvet pew. I watched as the sun came shining through the stained-glass windows. The minister dressed in a velvet robe opened the golden gilded Bible, marked it with a silk bookmark and said, "If any man will be my disciple, said Jesus, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."* "And I looked around and nobody was laughing."

Slide 24

Do you get his point? We make a mockery of Jesus words if all we want is a comfortable religion. We are a joke if we say we follow Jesus and yet we are not willing to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow him. As Martin Luther famously said, *"A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing."* So remember, *"If any man will be my disciple, said Jesus, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."*

Song – Consider Christ

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider Christ, the source of our salvation
That he should take the penalty for me
Though he was pure, a lamb without a blemish;
He took my sins and nailed them to the tree | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Consider Christ, that he could trust his Father
In the garden of Gethsemane
Though full of dread and fearful of the anguish;
He drank the cup that was reserved for me. |
|--|--|

*Chorus My Lord and God
You are so rich in mercy
Mere words alone are not sufficient thanks.
So take my life, transform, renew and change me
That I might be a living sacrifice*

Chorus
3. Consider Christ, for death he has defeated.
And he arose, appeared for all to see.
And now he sits at God's right hand in heaven
Where he prepares a resting place for me.

Benediction

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me & my words in this adulterous & sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Morning Tea

Why not join our ZOOM morning tea at 10:45?

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86821167331?pwd=dTZ6ekZsU09CblZPTHlrdktBYWJodz09>

Meeting ID: 868 2116 7331 Passcode: 305559