

THE CRUCIFIED LIFE

Matt. 16:21-26

INTRODUCTION:

The moral and spiritual (maturity) is one of the biggest problems in our church. Many church members have never been born again. Or have grown very little since they have united with the church.

Now we should take advantage of every opportunity that we have for Bible Study. Now we would like to remember that the cross is the life of Christ.

Perhaps you have played a game. You have put a word at the top of a sheet of paper and you write down all the words or things, or thoughts, in relation to the top word. If today, we used the word cross - what do you think of. The cross on which Christ died. You cannot belittle - Christ lived a cross-bearing life.

The cross was the fulfillment of his life.

The cross was the continuing experience in the life of Christ.

We think of the cross in past tense - something happened to Jesus.

We want no part of it. But there is the question - must Jesus bear the cross alone. No, there is a cross for me.

¹¹ The old rugged cross, on a hill far away. And that is where we want it to be. But we see in Matt. 16:24 a little different.

To some people, being a Christian is a matter of birth. They feel if they are

born in a Christian home or if they are brought up in a Christian family - that makes them Christians.

Dr. Orr was riding in a taxi in the Philippines. And he had a cheerful driver - and he asked if he were a Christian. The man said, sure. My name is Pedro. He had been given the name of a saint. And everything was in order. Others think being a Christian is giving their consent to a proper doctrine.

There was a man flying from Chicago to Los Angeles. And he stopped by a friend's house. And his friend ask him his mode of travel. And then his friend said, I still go the old fashioned way, I go by train. Don't you believe that planes are safe - but I know that air insurance isn't much more expensive than rail. - Are you afraid the pilot will not take you to where you want to go. No. And then he says, it takes me 2 1/2 days to travel from Chicago to Los Angeles by train. But he says I can go a half a day by plane. So in the round trip I save two days going and two coming. And then he said I believe in aviation - but not enough to want to fly. I think I will continue to travel by train as nature intended. Now the thing of it was - the man was giving his mental assent to it. There are people who have a Christian idea in the same way.

Ganhi accepted the Ten Commandments, practiced the Sermon on the Mount, but the very year he was assassinated he wrote Dr. Stanley Jones and said he could not become a Christian. Now some Christians think it is a matter of making a profession. Other people think it is finally joining the church.

V. 28 Now Christ said it is not everyone that says to me Lord, Lord - who will enter the kingdom of Heaven. But the man who actually does my Heaven-Father's will.

What is a truly Christian - Paul says if any man be in Christ, he becomes a new creature altogether. The past is finished and gone, everything becomes fresh and new.

2 Cor. 5:17. The first word of God's good news is repent. John the Baptist used this. And the Greek word is stronger than our English word which has a meaning of the feeling to be sorry. Rather it means change ones thinking, change ones ways, change ones feelings.

There was a thief who made a practice of snatching women's handbags. He would look out for a lady window shopping along the street, he would start running, and give the pre-occupied woman a hard push. Not enough to lose her balance but enough that would sorta make her wobble and as she slackened her grasp on the handbag, the thief would take it. And he had been practicing this and he would say "sorry". Now he did not feel sorry that he had bumped into the woman. And he did not change his ways.

Peter at Pentecost began preaching repentance, that your sins may be blotted out and a refreshing may come from the Lord. They were to change their thinking and change their ways. Now the dictionary gives some words a belief, to have faith, to give mental assent, to judge, to hold as true, to suppose, to hold as one's opinion. Now in the Scripture when it comes to the crucified life, it means exclusive dependance upon Jesus Christ. A Christian is one who belongs to Christ. And this is the real evidence that we have.

I. IT'S MEANING

There are mistaken ideas - as I have just stated about the crucified life. You take jewelry - sometimes you look at it and you may be mistaken about its real value.

Identify the cross as some suffering or burden comes through natural laws.

Or through illness. Or through death. Now really this is not the cross.

Christ's cross equals (something on which) one is crucified. (Gal. 5:24) Crucify the flesh.

Gal. 6:14 - By which the world is crucified.

Rom. 6:6 - The old self is crucified.

Gal. 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ. No longer I but Christ who lives in me. Phil. 1:21. "For me to live is Christ".

What does it mean to crucify. To crucify self ambitions, self will, self motives. And rather than make them supreme.

It means to take up the cross. And to deny self.

The cost of discipleship Bonhoffer wrote a paper once in which he said, "when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

Christ is the answer. And Christ is our death - and of course, Christ is our life.

II. THE NATURE OF THE CRUCIFIED LIFE

First, it is voluntary. If any man will.

*Matt 16
V. 24*

- Second, it is necessary. If any man will come with me. If we are going to follow Jesus - we must deny ourselves to go with Jesus.

Then the degree that we deny self and take up the cross - to that degree do we follow him.

- Third, it is personal. If any man - if any man. That makes it real personal.

- Fourth, it is universal. It is for the multitude - Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23.

- Fifth, it has a continuing challenge. And an experience in which Williams translates it - "the crucified life is one that you keep on following me". You take up Christ's cross daily and follow me. It relates to the totality of life. So it means you are going to crucify life - it's nature is that you have a very personal decision to make.

"If anyone wants to be my disciple, he must say 'No' to self, put his cross on his shoulders, & keep on following me." Wm's M. 16:24.

III. IT'S RESULTS

✓ First, it will rebuke the Devil. You remember the Scripture - as my Father sent me, even so, send I you. Here is a revelation of God to us and a revelation of Jesus Christ.

V. 21
Note our text here - and we have a rebuke to the Devil. Jesus must go to Jerusalem to suffer at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the Scribes. And in effect, Jesus was saying that he must be crucified. Now, whatever the meaning of

this, in V. 20, and 21, and 22 - this must not happen and cannot happen to you. And then there came the rebuke that makes us catch our breath when we hear it.

(Get behind me Satan.)

Now there are certain things that we must understand, the tragic dramatic scene.

V. 23 First, the tone of voice of Jesus when he said it - he certainly did not say it in anger. He said it like a man wounded to the heart with grief. Why should Jesus react like this.

Jesus reacted like that because at that moment it came back to him the force of the temptations that he had already faced in the wilderness, at the beginning of his ministry. Right at the beginning, he had been tempted to take away the power - the way of power. Give them bread, give them material things, and they will follow you.

Give them sensations said the temptor. Give them wonders and they will follow you. Compromise with the world said the temptor, reduce your standards - and meet the world half way and they will follow you.

It was precisely the same temptations with which Peter was confronting Jesus with all over again. Nor were these temptations ever wholly absent from the mind of Jesus.

And when the Devil had ended his temptations, he departed for a season - but again and again he launched his attack.

No one wants a cross. No one wants to die in agony. Even in the garden that same temptation came to Jesus, to take another way.

V. 23
Peter is offering another way to him now. And the answer of Jesus is the fact that Peter was urging upon him the very thing that the temptor had already whispered to him. That very thing that Jesus must have a way to escape the cross.

That is why Peter was Satan. Satan literally means adversary. That is why Peter's ideas were not God's but mens. Satan is in a force that seeks to deflect us from the way of God. Satan is any influence which seeks to make us turn back from the hard way that God has set before us. Satan is any power who seeks to make human desires take the place of the divine.

The thing that made the temptation more acute and severe - that it came from one he loved. Peter spoke as he did only because he loved Jesus. But he could not bear to think of Jesus trading this dreadful past - of dying an awful death. You know that is a hard temptation that comes by protecting love. There are times when our love seeks to deflect us from the perils of the path of God.

And that which sends us out to obey the commands which are given us - they are not easy. That which really wounded Jesus - that which made him speak as he did, was that the temptor spoke to him that day through the fond but mistaken love of Peter's heart. Therefore, the result of the crucified life is, that you are going to rebuke the Devil. You are going to rebuke the Devil.

Get behind me Satan. When Jesus said this - he was saying to Peter - Peter your place is behind me - not in front of me. It is your place to follow me in the way I choose. Not to try to lead me in a way in which you would like to go. If the phrase can be interpreted that way, something at least of it - it's sting is removed.

For it does not banish Peter from Christ's presence. Rather it puts him in his proper place to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Another way of interpreting it is that Jesus is saying to Satan at the end of the temptations, that get thee hence Satan - or get thee behind me Satan - is a command that Satan simply be gone. While his command to Peter is - be gone behind me. That is to say, become my follower again. Now Satan is banished from the presence of Christ. Peter is recalled to be Christ's follower. The one thing that Satan could never become is a follower of Christ. Because of his pride - and that is why he is Satan.

Now that is why if you are prepared to follow Christ even though you have sinned - there still is hope, in the here and also in the hereafter.

So the first result of the crucified life is to rebuke the Devil.

V. 25
Second, it will recruit you for life. The crucified life is something through which you will find life. In V. 25 - He says whosoever shall save his life shall lose it. And whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. It puts life on a higher level - John 10:10.

There is no real crucifixion without a resurrection. V. 21. And there is no resurrection without a crucifixion.

A missionary told of no service and blessings. The Lord has so ordered things that we cannot make a real sacrifice for him - he does so much more for us. And the difference between losing and finding life - is between existing and living. To exist

is simply to have the lungs breathing, the heart beating. To live is to live in a world where everything is worthwhile - where there is peace in the soul, joy in the heart, thrill in every moment. Jesus here gives us the recipe for life as distinct from existence.

X — Note, the man who plays for safety loses his life. Matt. was writing, and he said that some of the most bitter days of persecution - the time had well come, when you can save your life by abandoning your faith. But if you do, so far from saving life in the real sense of the term - you are losing life. The man who is faithful may die but he dies in faith. The man who abandons Christ for safety may live - but he lives to die.

In our day and generation - it is not a question of martyrdom - but it still remains a fact that if we meet life with a constant search for safety, security, ease, and comfort - if every decision is taken from worldly wise motives, we are losing all that makes life worthwhile. Life becomes soft and flabby - when it might be an adventure.

Life becomes a selfish thing when it might become radiant service. Life becomes earth bound when it should be reaching for the stars.

Someone once wrote the epitaph of a man. He was born a man - and died a grocer. Now any trade or profession might be substituted for the word grocer. A man who plays it safe ceases to be a man. For man is in the image of God.

X — Second note, the man who risks all - and maybe looks as though he has lost all

for Christ, finds life. It is a simple lesson in all history - that those who have not sought safety but have sought to go forward and give their lives, have made history. In the medical area, cures would not have existed. Those who have taken risk have made it easier for us in our nation. There have been mothers who have been declared to take risks. No child would ever be born if some mother was not prepared to take the risk. It is the man who is prepared to put his life, that there is a God. Who in the end, finds life.

V 126
X
Third, Jesus speaks of a warning here. Suppose a man plays it safe, suppose you gain the whole world, and suppose you find that life is not worth living. What can he give to get life back again? And the grim truth is that we cannot get life back again. In every decision of life, we are doing something to ourselves. We are making our selves a certain kind of person. You are building up steadily and inevitably a certain kind of character. Now we are making ourselves able to do certain things and quite unable to do other things. It is perfectly possible for a man to gain all the things that he has set his heart upon, and then to awaken one morning, to find that he has missed the most important thing of all.

The world stands for material things as opposed to God. And all material things - there are three things to be said. First, no one can take them with him at the end. He can only take himself. If he degraded himself in order to get them - then his regret will be bitter. Second, they cannot help a man in the shattering days of life. Material things will never mend a broken heart. They will never cheer a lonely soul. If by any chance a man gain his material possessions in a dishonorable way, there will come a day when conscience will speak and man will know his Hell, beginning on this side of the grave.

The world is full of voices crying out - that man is a fool who sells himself and

loses his soul.

Jesus asked, what are you going to give in exchange for your soul. This is an interesting word and we read about it in Ecc. What are you going to give in exchange for a disciplined soul. Ecc. 6:15. 26:14. It means that there is no price which will buy a faithful friend or a disciplined soul. So then, this final saying of Jesus, about the crucified life.

It can mean once a man has lost his real life, in his desire for security, there is no price that he can buy it back with again.

Second, it can mean a man owes himself and everything else to Jesus Christ. And there is nothing that a man can give to Christ in place of his life.

It is possible for a man to try to give his money to Christ, yet withhold his life. It is possible for a man to give lip service and withhold his life.

A man may give some offering to the church, but does not go to church. Obviously, he does not satisfy the demands of church membership.

The only possible gift to the church is ourselves. The only possible gift to Christ - there is no substitute for it. And nothing else will do.

So, the result of the crucified life is a rebuke to the Devil, recruitment for life.

V 24
Third, it will reveal your greatest challenge. Yes, the crucified life - as John 12:24 talks about - unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, that is the first law of life. It is self-sacrifice. Not self preservation. And it goes

on to V. 32.

Now the cross is central in God's universe if we are spiritual. It is central in all relationships of life. In our home, our church, our job.

What of this challenge.

The crucified life is an ever re-occurring challenge, in the theme of Jesus. Check back to V. 24. And notice the three things which you must be prepared to do if you are going to live this kind of life.

First, you must deny yourself. Ordinarily we use the word self-denial as a restricted sense. We use it to mean doing without something. For instance, here is a week of self-denial. Here is a pleasure of luxury. Now in order to contribute to some good cause, I am going to practice self-denial.

But that is only part of what Jesus meant. To deny ones self means, in every moment to say No to self - and Yes to God.

To deny ones self means finally and for all to dethrone himself and enthroned God. So God's ruling principle is present in your life.

Second, you take up his cross. This is to say, take up the burden of sacrifice. The Christian life is a life of service. The Christian may have to abandon his personal ambitions to serve Christ. It may be that he will discover that his place to render his

service to Jesus Christ may be a small thing, or it may be a place of prestige. He will certainly have to sacrifice time, leisure, pleasure - in order to serve God and serve his fellowmen.

To put it simply, you might stay comfortably by the fireside - or a place of entertainment. But on the other hand, you may have to sacrifice your duties at a club to go and visit in the home of some sad and lonely soul.

You may well have to sacrifice certain things, that you could well afford to possess in order to give more away. The Christian life is a life that is crucified.

So, you take up your cross daily. This is really important to do this.

Third, you must follow Christ. That is to say, you must follow Christ in perfect obedience. Now they used to have a game, follow the leader. Everything the leader did, however difficult or in the case of the game, however ridiculous, you had to copy it. Now the Christian life is a constant following of our leader. In constant obedience in thought, in action, we are to try to walk in the footsteps of Christ. Wherever Christ may lead.

In conclusion, I illustrate this with an experience that I had this week. Mrs. Eloise Carter passed away and on Monday I assisted with her funeral. This was the thing that set me off thinking about this sermon. And then I thought of how important it is for everyone to live the crucified life. Now I knew this lady several years back - she was a school teacher. She taught school. She was married and she had two children - a boy and a girl. Now her husband dropped dead during the second World War. He was on his way home from work. In his car, and he had a heart attack and died

very suddenly. Now this woman taught school. She had these two children in her home. A little girl was still going to school and the boy was about to begin college. Plus she had her invalid mother staying with her. I thought so many times about excuses people give me for not serving the Lord. And I remember her life. It flashed back before me during that funeral service. Every person would say, the average person, now this lady can be a Christian and devoted to Christ without giving a whole lot of time to the Lord. Now at that time, she was teaching a Sunday School Class. She took time for her class meetings. She was a member of W. M. U. - she took time for those meetings. She was a member of the Training Union - she took time for those meetings. Now we have Sunday School Teachers and Officers meeting - and she took time for that meeting. Sunday morning she was there for Sunday School. At eleven o'clock, we had worship, and she was there for worship. Sunday evening we had training union, and evening preaching service. Well, anybody as busy as she was wouldn't have time for anything else to be sure. Wednesday evening we had a teacher's and officer's meeting - she was there for that meeting. Wednesday evening we had the prayer meeting - the hour of power. And she was there for that meeting. And in between times, she was ministering to anyone who had a need. Taking care of her mother, seeing to her daughter in school, keeping up with her boy in college. Now I thought about that. That is something like the crucified life. Jesus said, if you will deny me - if any man is going to come after me, you are going to deny yourself. What do you deny yourself of for Jesus sake. How much really do you give up? Some of you can't give up your sleep to come to the worship service. Some of you can't give up this or that to come and attend church. If any man will deny himself and take up the cross, she took up the cross. Have you taken up the cross. And follow me. She followed Christ.

Shirley Moore; Nurse I.C.W. - Leigh Hospital ✓