



Following Jesus: Sacrificing

March 13, 2016

INTRO: The main objective in life is to determine “Why?” am I here? What’s my purpose in life? Our current sermon series answered that question: we are to follow the most compelling person who’s ever lived, Jesus. He has given us the greatest mission possible. He invites us to “follow Him.” Part of our obedience in following Jesus is to “fish for people, not fish.” There are certain things we are to LEARN and certain things we are to PRACTICE. **“GIVE a man a fish & you’ll feed him for a DAY. TEACH a man to fish & you’ll feed him for a LIFETIME.”** Jesus was trying to teach His disciples how to fish. He wanted them to fish together as Teams, not just as individuals. He calls this “Fishing Team” – **His church**. He caught them and released them to do ministry.

We must determine our priorities in life and make life fit around them. To achieve a reward, we must make certain SACRIFICES. If we want to achieve as an athlete; we diet, exercise, train, learn and practice. If we want to be a success in business, long hours must be spent learning the business and working with people. Calls have to be made and people must be treated in certain ways. To have a child, demands certain costs must be paid. The bottom line is “if you don’t love what you are doing, you’ll probably not be successful.”

There are 2 sections here. The first one deals with conflict. The 2nd addresses “Hospitality.” To be in relationship with Jesus means we are asked to make some sacrifices.

Matt 10:34-42

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law

against her mother-in-law—³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

³⁷ "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Jesus said in The Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers." We like the gentle, quiet, loving savior who came to unite, heal and forgive. I want a "peaceful, easy feeling." "Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give you" (John 14:27). Become a Christian and you'll have peace. These ARE Jesus' words. We believe them.

However, now He says He didn't come to bring peace, but a sword. And while he rebukes Peter for actually using a sword "those who live by the sword, die by the sword," Jesus actually insults people, talks bad about leaders in front of their followers, and causes a ruckus in the Temple area. A sword isn't "cozy." A sword divides. He didn't come to make everyone comfy, but to bring conflict. It wasn't that Jesus didn't bring peace; He did, but people just didn't respond to Him in the right way.

Ezekiel revealed that judgment would fall upon teachers who assured people that peace was coming when in fact, it was a lie. They "whitewashed" the truth." **Ezekiel 13:10-12** *"Because they lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash, therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth. When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, "Where is the whitewash you covered it with?"*

There are **political ramifications** if the truth is whitewashed. Possibly as many as 1 million soldiers from The United Kingdom died in World War I. The British people did not want World War II. When it appeared Hitler and the Nazis were on the move again, Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of England, made a pact with Adolf Hitler. The Fuhrer

“whitewashed the truth” and assured Chamberlain that all the Nazis wanted was Czechoslovakia. If they’d cede the Czechs to Hitler the Nazis would stop their aggression. Chamberlain believed the lie. Hitler was delighted because the Czech army would’ve put up significant resistance. That might have changed the entire complexion of WW2. Chamberlain returned home and announced: “Peace in our times.” The British were jubilant. It was the best news possible. Chamberlain was treated as a hero. Unfortunately, a deal with Hitler was a deal with the devil. 11 months later, the Nazis invaded Poland. Chamberlain went from national hero to goat. He will forever be known in The U.K. as “the Appeaser.”

There are **spiritual ramifications** if the truth is whitewashed. Following Jesus means we are asked to **sacrifice**. As Paul says, “I urge you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices.” Disciples are to sacrifice. What’s the criteria of discipleship?

1.) We are to LOVE Him more than we love anyone/anything else

“loves...more than me...” Who does He think He is? “He comes crashing into history, and then into our lives and takes over, preempting our most instinctive loyalties; presuming on our deepest affections, usurping our natural ties and asking (claiming) to be the most important person in our lives. These words imply that Jesus isn’t just a good man/teacher, but that He’s claiming a much higher place (as in “idolatry” – He is God)

2.) We must endure the cross, too *anyone who does not take his cross*

& follow me is not worthy of me. He did NOT say He was intentionally dividing families, but He did say that loyalty to him would cause some followers to be hated by their families because of the disbelief of other family members. (Jesus experienced this by his betrayal by Judas).

When someone decides to follow Jesus, the trouble begins. It may well begin within the family – and your own enemy becomes a family member. The passive term would be to “accept” the cross that comes to you; to “take up” one’s cross is an intentional act.

3.) We must become a “LOSER” before we find life This is very countercultural for any culture. We grab, not give. Jesus asks us to surrender or sacrifice our lives for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

This is the 2nd section. It's about service.

⁴⁰ "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Note the element of service, even in small and minor ways. Giving a cup of water to a thirsty person isn't hard. It's just awareness and kindness. "Little ones" doesn't mean children, though of course, Jesus loved children and was perturbed when they tried to keep children away from Him. "Little ones" is a term of affection for those who are following Him. They are young in the faith.

But since you were probably thinking of little ones being babies, did you know I was a grandfather? (**PICS 1-4**) Lonnie is now 4 ½ months old. She loves her pacifier. She associates it with sleep. She starts to sleep with it in her mouth but at some point it falls out. When she realizes it's missing, wakes up and cries (**PIC #5 – POUT**). So Jesse's had to break her of this habit. She finally achieved victory – and Lonnie slept through the night. Jesse had to sacrifice to achieve her reward of sleeping through the night. Lonnie was NOT happy about having her comforter taken away from her.

A member, Tim, related that 2 weeks after his wife had their first child, Cathy had to go back to work. That was emotionally draining. They tried arranging child care but this was their first child so everything had to be just right. They interviewed several potential nannies. A couple were immediate rejections. They finally settled on one. After a couple of weeks, however, his wife decided that she couldn't take having the nanny any longer. She knew she could do a far better job and she wanted to be at home with the child. She quit her

job and they dismissed the nanny. It was a HUGE financial sacrifice. Kind of like Christmas, “a baby changed everything” for them. They had to be creative in how they could handle their finances. They had to give up a lot of things they liked because of the baby. But they felt sacrificing for the goal of the mother being present with their son was well worth it the cost. He said the benefits far exceeded the sacrifices. He was so grateful that they were financially able to do this, knowing that not everyone can afford to do this. That’s even truer now than it was nearly 30 years ago. Also, one of the most wonderful things I know of is when parents choose to adopt or become foster parents. Again, it’s counter-cultural.

What was the last word in today’s scripture reading? **REWARD.** There’s an incentive to doing this = reward! “What’s in it for me?” The cross. Die to yourself. That doesn’t sound very appealing. But what happens after the cross? Resurrection. Heaven.

Heb 12:1-3 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* The “return on investment” for disciples is truly out of this world!