

The Liberty and Value of True Discipleship (Mt. 16:13-27)

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH: THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

- A. Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God (Mt. 16:15). This conversation happened 9 months before He died on the cross. *Christ* is the English transliteration of the Greek *christos* that translates for the Hebrew word translated in English as *messiah* (or anointed one).

¹⁵...***“Who do you say that I am?”***¹⁶***Peter...said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”***

¹⁷***Jesus answered...¹⁸“...on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.²⁰Then He commanded...that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. (Mt. 16:15-20)***

- B. The apostles did not understand what kind of Messiah Jesus was—a suffering and dying Messiah. They were looking for a victorious, conquering king to liberate Israel from the oppression of Rome. Peter’s confession was accurate, but inadequate—not understanding He must die to redeem Israel. Jesus’ gave three predictions of His death and resurrection (Mk. 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34).

²¹***From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...be killed, and be raised the third day.²²Then Peter...began to rebuke Him, saying, “...this shall not happen to You!”²³But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Mt. 16:21-23)***

II. DISCIPLESHIP: SELF-DENIAL UNDER JESUS’ LEADERSHIP LEADS TO LIBERTY

- A. Jesus defined the nature of discipleship (Mt. 16:24-27). Jesus spoke these words to “the crowds” along with the apostles (Mk. 8:34), as He now explained that the cross was not something that only He must embrace, but His disciples must also embrace it as they walk in relationship with Him and honor His leadership. His teaching on discipleship can only be understood in context to the first commandment (Mt. 22:37) and with a view to our real inheritance—eternal rewards (Mt. 16:27).

²⁴***If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.***

²⁵***Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.***

²⁶***For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?²⁷For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Mt. 16:24-27)***

- B. The call to self-denial is central to the gospel message. It is not an invitation to a higher kind of Christian living, but an invitation to salvation that flows from a God-centered orientation of life. The gospel is a call to self-denial for the sake of love, not to seek self-fulfillment on our terms.
- C. The cost of non-discipleship is greater than most understand. The only way to walk in the liberty of the Spirit is by embracing His leadership which results in embracing self-denial for the sake of love.
- D. God’s main agenda in our life is that we develop humility, while He opens and closes doors in our life to prepare us for future assignments (Rev. 3:8). A spirit of self-denial enables us to respond rightly to opportunities, as well as temptations, disappointments, setbacks, trials, and mistreatment.

- E. **Deny himself:** To deny ourselves speaks of placing God's plans, values, and ways above our own. It is a call to embrace Jesus' leadership in our life and renounce assuming the primary leadership over our life even as we resist sinful attitudes and actions and all that stands in the way of God's will. It is not a call to rigorous asceticism, self-hatred, or punishing ourselves for our failures.
- F. We are to deny the things we long for that are outside of God's will related to fulfilling our bodily appetites, seeking what our eyes covet, and our pride's demands in being honored and promoted. The "default" of the human heart is to pursue more comfort, pleasure, promotion, and vindication of ourselves—this hinders us from rejoicing in God's leadership in our life with faith and humility.
- G. **Save his life:** If a person refuses to yield to His leadership by controlling their own life in this age, they will suffer the loss of something far more valuable in the future. This speaks of the loss of potential eternal reward (for believers) or the loss of the offer of eternal life to unbelievers.
- H. **Finds life:** If a person releases control of their life to Jesus, they will find or gain something of far greater value in terms of liberty in their heart in this age and eternal rewards in the age to come.
- I. **Gain the whole world:** If you had everything the world offers, what would you have? The lust of the flesh (sensuality), the lust of the eyes (greed), and pride—which all passes away at one's death.
¹⁶**For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...**
¹⁷**And the world is passing away ...but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 Jn. 2:16-17)**
- J. Jesus boldly called His disciples to embrace His leadership even when it calls us to sacrifice money (Mt. 19:16-29), sinful activities (Mt. 5:28-29), relationships, reputation, and life (Mt. 10:21-22).
²⁹**If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Mt. 5:29)**
²¹**Now brother will deliver up brother to death...children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.** ²²**And you will be hated by all for My name's sake... (Mt. 10:21-22)**
- K. The message of the cross has two applications. First, we freely receive what Jesus did on the cross to enable us to be fully accepted in a deep and eternal relationship with God. Second, in a grateful response of love we embrace His leadership, which leads us to die to our desires that are outside of God's will. *Jesus' work on the cross for us* enables us to embrace the cross and walk in love.
¹⁸**For the message of the cross ...to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18)**
¹⁴**But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14)**
- L. The Spirit shines His spotlight on areas at a pace we can respond to. He convicts us with hope. Every time that we die to something in response to loving Jesus and His leadership, it is followed by a fresh impartation of resurrection life that is manifested in a far greater way in the age to come.
¹¹**For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh...** ¹⁶**Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.** ¹⁷**For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. 4:11-17)**