

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, August 30 (A) – Matthew 16:21-28

Tips of Discipleship: *Lose Your Life*

Focus Question: *How did you lose your life this week?*

word of life

“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 16:25 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 16:21-28

It is the eighteen chapter of the Gospel of Matthew before Jesus foretells his own suffering, death and resurrection. No one wants to hear about a friend or teacher going through suffering or hardship. Peter tries to change this prediction. “God forbid it, Lord” (Matthew 16:22 NRSV) Peter does not want this to happen to Jesus.

1. *What makes Peter believe Jesus does not need to go through suffering or death?*
2. *Why might Peter expect God to intervene first?*

Jesus silences such a suggestion with force. “Get behind me Satan!” (Matthew 16:23 NRSV) This is a similar rebuke as found at the time of temptation when Jesus says to the devil, “Away with you, Satan!” (Matthew 4:10 NRSV)

3. *What makes Jesus think Peter is speaking the words of Satan?*
4. *Why might Satan try to convince Jesus not to go through with dying on the cross?*

Jesus is not done with Simon Peter. “You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” (Matthew 16:23 NRSV) What a strange twist of events for Peter. Just prior to this confrontation, Peter aced the test about the identity of Jesus when Peter had been asked directly by Jesus, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15 NRSV)

5. *As a human, how could Peter not be setting his mind on human things?*
6. *How is it possible for humans to set their mind on divine things?*

Suffering and self-denial is not reserved just for Jesus, but he invites others to join him in denying themselves, picking up the cross, and following him. Already the disciples are being rejected; could there possibly be more? Jesus is clear: “Absolutely!” It appears impossible for the disciples to hear the promise of resurrection on the third day.

Jesus cuts through any illusion of an easy path to follow Jesus. Discipleship is not a whim, but includes a commitment: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:20 NRSV)

7. *What does it mean to “lose one’s life”?*
8. *How would saving one’s life be detrimental in the long run?*
9. *How does someone save his or her life?*

Jesus describes a future day when God’s mighty angels will come and judgment will be made. This losing one’s life in order to have eternal life is serious business. It’s all about having priorities.

10. *What does Jesus hope followers will remember about being a disciple?*

word among us

Casper lost many things on that Monday. He lost his car keys, eyeglasses, and book. Years ago, he had lost his ability to bounce up from his chair and walk quickly to the door. Life was not easy. But on that Monday, he spent the day volunteering at the neighborhood school. He read to the younger children and listened to the older ones read to him. It didn't matter what he was asked to do, he loved being at the school.

1. *How was Casper giving his life away?*
2. *What did Casper gain from his time at the school?*

Jackie didn't have much money to pay for her apartment or food, but that didn't matter. She loved to take her coins and buy trinkets for the elderly in her apartment building. No one had much, so her little gesture brought joy. She would stay, listen to the stories of the elderly, and try to learn from their wisdom. Although Jackie was just a young adult, she had already learned life can be quite difficult.

3. *How was Jackie giving her life away?*
4. *What did Jackie gain from her time with the elderly?*

The whole concept of “*giving one's life away*” is a foreign concept in our fast-paced consumer world. Too often, we chase after stuff, believing it will help us to feel better and make us whole. Instead of giving, we invest our time accumulating things. Jesus reverses the trend of consumerism by encouraging his followers to give their life away.

5. *When did you first begin to understand what Jesus meant by that phrase “to give your life away”?*
6. *What makes it challenging for you personally “to give your life away”?*
7. *What role does sin have in this process of “giving your life away”?*

Jesus also encourages his followers to pick up the cross. This does not mean to suffer through the inconveniences of life such as a long line at the grocery. A cross is an instrument of death. Due to the size and weight of a cross, a person does not easily pick up a cross. Jesus is underscoring his invitation to “give one's life away”. Carrying a cross involves death of one's own selfish desires as well as the possibility of one's own death.

Imagine a cross big enough for you to be placed upon. Imagine the weight of that cross. Imagine you being willing to be placed upon that cross and facing death – all for the sake of Jesus.

8. *What thoughts and feelings do you have as you imagine the cross?*
9. *Is that helpful or meaningful to imagine your own sacrificial death on the cross? Why or why not?*
10. *What would it mean this week to deny yourself for the sake of Christ?*
11. *What would it mean this week to pick up the cross of Christ?*
12. *What does it mean for you to join Christ for eternal life?*

Prayer

Lamb of God, you sacrificed your life so we might live. Inspire us to lose our life for your sake.
Amen

Dig Deeper

Romans 12:9-21

last word

This week, give your life away, again and again.



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