

MENS LIFE BLOOMINGTON

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

The Cross | Matthew 16:24-25

Overview: When we received a Christmas card from my niece who lives in Michigan, I was struck with the words at the bottom of her card: “May the coming year be filled with opportunities to show kindness, share love, and bring joy to others.” Jesus said, “**Love one another even as I have loved you.**” He loved us by denying his own glory, taking up his cross, and following the Via Dolorosa or Way of Sorrows. How can we go about loving others as Jesus loved us? Of first order is to Be Kind.

Why I Picked This Verse: I picked these verses because living the Christian life is one of the dominant and ever-recurring themes of Jesus' teaching. These are things which Jesus said to men again and again ([Matthew 10:37-39](#); [Mark 8:34-37](#); [Luke 9:23-27](#); [Luke 14:25-27](#); [Luke 17:33](#); [John 12:25](#)). The Christmas card I received that asked for opportunities to show kindness resonated, due to my recent contemplations on the words ‘Be Kind’ and the idea of kindness, love, and charity being the core of Christian Living.

Video: Core 52 Video or Bible Project Reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug2dFZliq50>

Segment Questions: (References are on back)

- Have you ever given something up during Lent? If so, what made it difficult?
- *Read Matthew 16:24* Ordinarily we use the word self-denial in a restricted sense meaning giving something up. Is that all Jesus means here or is there more to it?
- Jesus says, “Follow Me”. How does that connect to denying yourself?
- *Read Philippians 2:3-5* What are your thoughts about taking up your Cross daily? Is it bearing the burdens of life with a smile? Is it more than that?
- *Read Matthew 16: 25* What do think Jesus was saying about losing life to find it? Is he talking about having eternal life someday after we die? What might it mean to find life in the here and now?
- *Read Galatians 5:13-14...23-24* Do you believe that there is a connection between denying self and taking up your cross in these verses?
- Mark Moore states that *“The way of the Cross is not just what Jesus did, it is what we are to imitate and both Crosses, His and ours, Saves. When Jesus took up His Cross, he saved souls. When Christians take up our Cross, we save Society.”* What does he mean? Do you agree or disagree with Pastor Mark? What does saving Society look like?

Action Questions:

- Would you be willing to share an area of your life you’ve not yet submitted to the Lordship of Jesus? Identify the possible first step for you to release this area to God’s control.
- How are you doing in your role of taking up your cross in saving Saving Society?

Closing Personal Prayer: Lord, we pray that the coming year be filled with opportunities to show kindness, share love, and bring joy to others. Your beloved son Jesus loved us by denying his own glory, taking up his cross, and following the Via Dolorosa. Teach us, Lord, and empower us to go about loving others as Jesus loved us, that our lives might be a pleasing aroma where we live, work, and play.

When I was a child, I was raised in a faith that focused heavily on the fact that Jesus died for my sins, my personal sins. It left me with a deep need to try and pay Jesus back somehow by being good enough to relieve some of the debt. It robbed me of joy because, of course, I failed and continued to sin. As I grew intellectually in my faith, I understood that there was nothing I could do to add to or take away from what Jesus had already done. I eventually came to realize that I would unconsciously return in my heart to those feelings of “paying my debt” when I would read or hear the words “deny myself and take up my cross”. In trying to follow him, as he calls me to do, I’ve focused more on how Jesus walked among people by serving. It appears that the cross (dying to self) brings the joy of living in Christ. I’ve always found satisfaction in helping others, but now it is for the right reasons. Because people are made in God’s image, I can see that it is easier to become a servant and find joy in knowing that serving them in some way is what Jesus would have done.

I have been giving some thought this past year to the words **Be Kind**, trying to understand what that looks like in action and what it means to me. I’ve meditated on **1 Corinthians 13** which tells us how we are to live out our life in Christ, and I’ve come to appreciate the KJV which uses the word Charity, rather than Love. Charity is associated with words like kindness, giving, love, and other synonyms. We think of Charity as an action word, giving and receiving. Here it is unearned, unmerited love dispensed in relationship to others. That seems unnatural. People earn respect, trust, love. Just give it away?? Who does that? Christians are supposed to. Jesus commands us in **John 13,34** **“Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another...”**. Like Jesus we are to be known by our self-giving, sacrificial, unconditional love for one another. Jesus even calls us to love our enemies in **Luke 6: 27-36**

I’ve been more and more convinced over the past year that **Being Kind** is what it means to live out these verses in Matthew. We are called to die to self, becoming the Walking Dead Reality Show in relationship to others. **Galatians 5** challenges us to be crucified with Christ (on our cross) so we can be raised to a new life. We are resurrected to follow Christ, to love as he loved, to serve as he served, and to give our lives for others just as Jesus did. **Colossians 3, Romans 12**

John Gill ...a man's faith is only for himself; a just man lives by his own faith, and not another's; one man's faith will be of no service to another, and the same is true of hope; but by love saints serve one another, both in things temporal and spiritual, and chiefly ***it is said to be the greatest***, because faith will be changed for vision, and hope for enjoyment, but ***love will abide***, and be in its full perfection and constant exercise, ***to all eternity***.

Matthew 16:24 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*

Philippians 2:3-5 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus*

Matthew 16:25 *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”*

Galatians 5:13,14...23,24 *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*