

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabile.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabile.org).

**Date:** March 22, 2009

**Title:** The Way of the Cross

**Text:** Matthew 10:32-41; 16:21-28

**Theme:** Death by crucifixion is the only way one can come to Jesus.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

## The Way of His Cross

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**Theme:** Death by crucifixion is the only way one can come to Jesus.

### **Introduction:**

“Our taking up the Cross is basic to our following Christ, not something we are called to do after many years. The so-called ‘deeper Christian life’ is but the normal Christian life. Anything less is abnormal. There is no greater depth to the Christian life but what God expects of all of us from the beginning. If we are getting any ‘deeper’ it is only because we have hitherto been shallow. We must take our Cross and follow Jesus.”  
 (“The Call Of The Cross,” Chip Brogden,  
<http://prophetindia.googlepages.com/carryingcross>)

God takes what is weak and makes it strong; He causes evil to work for good, and makes the foolish look wise. The work of the cross is so powerful as to crash and crush the wisdom of this world. The cross introduces an entirely new worldview. When sending out the twelve, He forces them to confront the blunt brutality of the way of the cross (Matt. 10).

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:38).

“The disciples would be familiar with cross-bearing as a figure of speech by reason of the crucifixion of criminals in Jerusalem.” (*Robertson’s New Testament Word Pictures* on Matthew 16:24.)

He speaks of rejection (vv. 32, 33), violence (v. 34), animosity (v. 35), suspicion (v. 36), partiality and priority (v. 37). All of this marks the way of the cross. In fact, if the believing do not embrace the cross, then they are not worthy of Him (v. 38). It is only in losing one’s life that it can be found (v. 39). The cross forms a branding, a stigmata whereby those who bear it, wear it. The challenge laid before His disciples is not for them to seek greater depths or higher heights of personal fellowship or intimate communion, but to understand what it meant and means to follow Him. No one is Christian, a disciple, unless and until they follow Him to His cross.

“A Christian by Any Other Name,” is an article written by Lisa Miller in NEWSWEEK, March 16, 2009. Her article addresses the idea that instead of using the name “Christian” people are calling themselves, “Followers of Jesus.” They believe the word “Christian” carries too much baggage. Although I agree in part with this diluted understanding of the word “Christian,” I believe we need to take it back. Just like the words “Cross” and the statement “Follower of Jesus.”

In Matthew 16, Jesus once more confronts and challenges His disciples. He asks a question of inquiry, "Who do people say I am?" The response is predictable. The next question is more pointed, "Who do you say I am?" The answer is divine, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." From this point on Jesus openly begins to teach of His death, burial, and resurrection (v. 21). This thought completely undermines the prevailing opinion of His disciples as to who and what the Messiah will be and do. In fact, it was down right repugnant to His followers (v. 22).

Jesus immediately corrects their erroneous perspective and declares that not only must He die, but if they would be His followers they would also have to die. "Christ, having shown his disciples that he must suffer, and that he was ready and willing to suffer, here shows them that they must suffer too, and must be ready and willing." (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on Matthew 16:24*).

"Our Lord's answer is not in the main a reaffirmation of the necessity that he himself should suffer and die, **but rather an emphatic assertion of the consequences which this will involve for the disciples and of the duty which it will impose upon them to follow him along the same pathway of suffering.**" ("A Sermon on Matthew 16:24-25," Geerhardus Vos, Preached November 22, 1903 at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV3N3A1.asp>).

In many ways, the present state of American Christianity has acquiesced (i.e., conceded) to the culture of this world. We have no back bone in our stance as Christians. Because we do not study history, we are destined to repeat history. We lose when we fail to remember our past heritage as a church in the years between the apostles and the 1500's. Consider the way of the cross for those who stood fast in the face of compromise.

Behind the Apostles, St. Ignatius is perhaps the most famous name associated with the early Church. However, little is known about his life or his career as bishop. What we do know of him stems from his writings, in particular the seven epistles Ignatius wrote on his way to his death. At around the year 110 A.D., Trajan sentenced Ignatius to death by exposure to the wild beasts in the arena. During his journey from Antioch to Rome for his martyrdom, Ignatius wrote seven letters addressed to the Christians in the communities of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Rome, Philadelphia, and Smyrna, all of which were along the journey's path. These seven letters tell little of his life, but do reveal his love of the Church, his desire for Church unity, his hatred of schism and heresy, and his desire for martyrdom for the sake of Christ. In his letter to the Romans, Ignatius writes:

"I am writing to all the Churches and I enjoin all, that I am dying willingly for God's sake, if only you do not prevent it. I beg you, do not do me an untimely kindness. Allow me to be eaten by the beasts, which are my way of reaching to God. I am God's wheat, and I am to be ground by the teeth of wild beast, so that I may become the pure bread of Christ." (Ch. 4)

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/550336/posts>

Consider the mindset that produced such thinking. Many have criticized the willingness of some to throw themselves on the proverbial spear for the sake of Jesus, but the contrast with our current state is stark. We think sacrifice is going to church every weekend or giving regularly (and we are not even talking about 10% of one's gross income), or being inconvenienced at work because we said we were Christian. Our current level of commitment is anemic because of our adaptation to our American culture.

What follows is a description of the way of the cross, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." "This discourse was intended to show Peter and the rest of the disciples the nature of his kingdom." (*Adam Clarke's Commentary on Matthew 16:24*).

### **THE BIG PICTURE:**

- March 1 - The Relationship of the Cross to the Hero's Work
- March 8 - The Wisdom of the Cross
- March 15 - The Work of the Cross
- March 22 - The Way of the Cross**
- March 29 - The Word of the Cross
- April 5 - The Weight of the Cross
- April 12 - The Wonder of the Cross

### **Its Eternal Value:**

There are only two options before us. We will either continue to serve self or we will turn from self and serve the Savior. One leads to death and the other to life. One is the way of unbelief and the other of belief.

### **The Problem:**

We have been conditioned to serve self. Serving self is the most natural thing known to us. Yet until we repent of our self love and seek Him above self, we will never know life and joy.

### **The Storyline:**

In the storyline of God, we are confronted with a choice that is as old as the Garden. When God killed the innocent animal from which He clothed Adam and Eve, they might have recoiled at the barbaric nature of the event. But unless and until God acted, they would have continued in their path of self-love and eternal destruction. The abhorrent nature of that first act is repeated in Matthew 16.

When you accepted the Son of God as your sacrifice for sin, all that is stated in Matthew 16:24 happened. Your experience of this truth might not have been as real, but judicially this is what happened.

My desire in this study is to help us realize just what happened and how we are now to live knowing the truth.

**Questions:****Matthew 10:16-42**

1. Does the “world” look favorably on the Christian?
2. What is Jesus warning His disciples about?
3. In the midst of intense persecution, what is Jesus calling them to do (vv. 19, 20)?
4. What is verse 24 telling us as disciples of Christ?
5. What do you believe the meaning of confessing and denying is in verses 32, 33?
6. How would you understand the entire tone of this paragraph?
7. What are His followers being called upon to do (vv. 38, 39)?

**Matthew 16:24-28; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-26**

8. Is bearing His cross optional for the believer?
9. Can a person be saved if they do not take up His cross?

**Mark 10:17-31**

10. What did cross-bearing look like for the rich young ruler?
11. Is this what it means for us?
12. If all that is stated is true, how then should we live?
13. Do you think the passages are describing how a believer becomes a disciple or how an unbeliever becomes a disciple?
14. Is it possible to be a Christian without being a disciple?
15. Why do you think current discipleship seems so anemic compared to what the biblical text describes?
16. What questions does this text invite you to ask?
17. Why does it appear as if the cross has been removed from present day Christianity?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know what comes from the cross is now identified by the cross.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose the way of the cross over the way of self.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of living the crucified life.

All four ideas in Matthew 16:24 are synonymous thoughts. There might be progression and there might be distinction, but they are essentially saying the same thing.

**Outline:**

- I. **First**, the way is marked by desire (“If anyone wishes to come after Me”)

All who come, come by force of will. None come contrary to their will. God works in such a manner that all who come, come willingly. John Wesley correctly notes how, “None is forced; but if any will be a Christian, it must be on these terms.” (*John Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament on Matthew 16:24*).

“It denotes a deliberate choice, and cheerfulness and resolution in that choice.” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary* on Matthew 16:24). Our Lord’s appeal is open and specific. It is open to all, and it is specific as to what is demanded.

The word for “desire” is “will.” It stresses the desires or choices of an individual. Those who would follow Jesus must desire to do so. No one comes who is not first willing. Our desire for Him overrides our desire for self preservation.

II. **Second**, the way is marked by denial (“he must deny himself”)

“It is a compounded word, and the preposition **apo** abundantly increases the meaning. A follower of Christ will need to observe it in its utmost latitude of meaning, in order to be happy here, and glorious hereafter. A man's self is to him the prime cause of most of his miseries.” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary* on Matthew 16:24).

In a context of cultural and economic opulence, those who follow Him must live a life of personal sacrifice and denial. We shun the evil and embrace the good. “That is, let him surrender to God his will, affections, body, and soul. Let him not seek his own happiness as the supreme object, but be willing to renounce all, and lay down his life also, if required.” (*Albert Barnes’ New Testament Commentary* on Matthew 16:24).

**The pursuit of Christ is to follow where He has already been and is currently leading. His people emanate from the cross, live in the cross, and are for the cross.** “If self-denial be a hard lesson, and against the grain to flesh and blood, it is no more than what our Master learned and practiced before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction.” (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary* on Matthew 16:24).

III. **Third**, the way is marked by death (“take up his cross”)

“An allusion to a Roman custom, that the malefactor, who was to be crucified, took his cross upon his shoulder, and carried it to the place of execution.” (*William Burkitt’s Notes on the New Testament* on Matthew 16:24).

The cross represents death. Death to sin and death to self. “Let him in all things deny his own will, however pleasing, and do the will of God, however painful.” (*John Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament* on Matthew 16:24).

To walk the way of the cross is, “To embrace the condition which God has appointed, and bear the troubles and difficulties he may meet with in walking the Christian road.” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary* on Matthew 16:24). This is the heartbeat of biblical Christianity.

IV. **Fourth**, the way is marked by discipleship (“follow me”)

Jesus very clearly notes, “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Our Lord was accustomed to the mob, the seething mass of humanity pressing upon Him looking for the miracle that would bring them release. They wanted Him for what He could do for their immediate condition, but they did not want Him for who He was. The prevailing opinion was to see Him as a political figure or a humanitarian force, but He is a King, Priest, and Prophet. Those who would align themselves with Him must come behind Him. There is no other way there are no other options. The appeal is unswerving and straightforward. All who come to Him come in this manner. These four marks are true of all who have come. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you have come the way of the cross. You are marked by desire, denial, death, and discipleship.

In our text we read the statement, "Follow me." **Follow me.** Christ is leading; He is directing; He is guiding. He places Himself in front of us to protect and to provide. "A true disciple of Christ is one that doth follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him. A disciple of Christ comes after him, as the sheep after the shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven." (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on Matthew 16:24*).

What does it mean to follow Jesus? Listen to this testimony by Church Father Polycarp in 155AD.

Polycarp is a celebrated figure in the history of Christianity. A direct pupil of the apostle John, Polycarp lived between 70 and 155 A.D., connecting him to both the biblical apostles and the age of the early church fathers. His martyrdom stands as one of the most well documented events of antiquity. The emperors of Rome had unleashed bitter attacks against the Christians during this period, and members of the early church recorded many of the persecutions and deaths. Polycarp was **arrested on the charge of being a Christian** -- a member of a politically dangerous cult whose rapid growth needed to be stopped. Amidst an angry mob, the Roman proconsul took pity on such a gentle old man and urged Polycarp to proclaim, "Caesar is Lord". If only Polycarp would make this declaration and offer a small pinch of incense to Caesar's statue he would escape torture and death. To this Polycarp responded, **"Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"** Steadfast in his stand for Christ, Polycarp refused to compromise his beliefs, and thus, was burned alive at the stake. Polycarp's martyrdom is historical reality. **He died for one reason - his unyielding faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ.**  
<http://www.polycarp.net/>

"To follow Christ is to take him for our master, our teacher, our example; to believe his doctrines, to uphold his cause, to obey his precepts, and to do it though it leads to heaven by the way of the cross." (*People's New Testament Commentary on Matthew 16:24*).

These are the four marks of the cross. Matthew than explains what this means.

A. The cross changes our identity (v. 25).

In the cross-work of Jesus Christ those who follow Him lose what and who they once were **in Adam** and become what and who they now are **in Christ**. It is for this reason Galatians 2:20 can say, "I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." It is for this reason Colossians 3:3 and 4 can say, "**For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life,** is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

Does our identity reflect the way of the cross?

B. The cross changes our priority (v. 26).

Those things we once deemed necessary and important become insignificant and "rubbish [thrown to the dogs]" (Phil. 3:8, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.")

As a man, I fully understand the need to work and the desire for simplicity and an "easy" life (whatever that might mean), but the cross casts its shadow over all these things. Whatever it is that holds you in captivity, that "thing" is under the cross.

Do our priorities reflect the way of the cross?

C. The cross changes our economy (v. 27).

God has graciously allowed work to be of intrinsic value. There is an unchanging law, much like gravity, whereby benefit comes from investment. You work, you eat. Yet, it is possible for us to get lost in the trappings of this world. We slowly begin to listen to the unbelieving as it relates to what is truly important. It affects our relationships, our work, our play, our perspective on what is right and wrong, our worldview, our goals, what we deem beautiful and necessary. Soon enough the years click by and we find that what the Bible describes as discipleship is nothing remotely similar to what we are doing. We have invested so deeply in this world that we no longer understand God's system of economy. Remember, through common grace we live comfortable and convenient lives, but this world is not our home we are simply passing through. There is a great day of reckoning whereby those things done by the flesh will be consumed as the waste of our old sinful flesh and God will show us the power of the cross and reward His work in us and through us to those around us. Do not forget God's economy.

Does our view of economy reflect the way of the cross?

All who follow must lose their life in Him, forfeit all they deem valuable for Him, and believe His system of justice through Him.

The invitation is direct and non-negotiable. It is folly to think one is a disciple, if one is not following. He is not my Master if I am not His servant. He is not my Teacher, if I am not His student. He is not my Shepherd, if I am not His sheep. The one attribute qualifying a servant, student, and sheep is determined by the simple word "**follow.**"

**"To take His hand means surrender on our part.** Let there be no mistake about that. To take it means that we are done with our pride, our evasions, our self-deceptions. It means that we are ready to be done with the false and ugly things which we see in ourselves, and those other false and ugly things which we cannot see for sheer blindness, but which the pure eye of God sees so well. It means that we are ready to let the whole world go and endure every kind of hardship and loss for the sake of Him who died for us." <http://www.abccog.org/lamont.htm>. Sermon preached by Daniel Lamont, Helensburgh, Scotland, 1920.

When we read such statements in the context of our comfortable and convenient circumstances, we fail to feel their pressing significance. "It is easy to show that these uncompromising sayings of our Lord about the denial of self, the renunciation of life are but the sharpest expression with reference to concrete cases of something which everywhere underlies his teaching as an element of universal significance. No, it is not in exceptional cases; it is not in periods of persecution alone that the duty thus described devolves upon the Christian. **Christianity as such in its very essence is a religion of self-denial and cross-bearing and life-surrender.**" ("A Sermon on Matthew 16:24-25," Geerhardus Vos, Preached November 22, 1903 at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey). <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV3N3A1.asp>

No one escapes this; all participate in it. As Christians we have no rights of our own. Jesus is not simply necessary; He is enough. "What were the disciples thinking about on that dusty road in Caesarea Philippi two thousand years ago when Jesus said, 'Take up his cross'? First century Jewish historian Josephus tells us that eight hundred Jews were crucified in Jerusalem over one hundred years before (Antiquities 13.14.2). After a revolt following the death of Herod the Great, the Roman proconsul Varus crucified two thousand Jews (Antiquities 17.10.10). Crucifixion was a common practice in the Roman Empire." "Christ Displays His Glory - Winning by Losing: The Paradox of Discipleship," by John MacArthur. All Rights Reserved (A copy of this message on cassette tape may be obtained by calling 1-800-55-GRACE) Matthew 16:24-27 Tape GC 2321. <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg2321.htm>

Is this still true today? Can this be said of us? Listen to the reports given to us by **THE VOICE OF THE MARTYRS**. <http://www.persecution.com/>

- **Pakistan - Islamic Extremists Beat Evangelist, Steal Rickshaw**
  - Evangelist "Azir" suffers broken tooth, injury to lip. (02-02-2009).
- **India - UPDATE - Relief Camps Closed in Orissa**
  - Government authorities in Orissa state have shut down relief camps forcing thousands of Christians displaced by the wave of violence that began last August to flee. (01-22-2009).
- **China - Deathly Ill Husband Denied Visitation with his Imprisoned Wife**
  - Chinese authorities denied Hua Zaichen a final meeting with his imprisoned wife, Shuang Shuying. (01-15-2009).

- **India - Four Christians Arrested in Madhya Pradesh**
  - On Jan. 5, police arrested four Christians on false charges of forcible conversion in the village of Kushalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India. (01-14-2009).
- **India - Church Leaders Attacked**
  - Despite relative calm during Christmas, Christian leaders attacked. (01-07-2009).
- **Pakistan - Young Christian Woman and Her Father Imprisoned**
  - Sandul Bibi and her father Gulsher Masih falsely accused of blasphemy. (12-19-2008).
- **Eritrea - Approximately 100 Christians Arrested**
  - 100 Christians arrested since last November. (01-05-2009).
- **House Church Leaders Released from Prison**
  - On Nov. 25, 2008, Pastor Wang Weiliang was released from prison on "medical" parole. (12-08-2008).
- **Iraq - Two Christian Sisters Killed**
  - Two Christian Sisters Killed by Islamic Extremists. (12-17-2008).
- **Christian Persecution Intensifies Across China**
  - China Aid Association reports that since the end of the Olympics persecution has intensified. (10-31-2008).
- **U.S. Department of State Gravely Concerned by China's Harassment of Pastor "Bike" Zhang**
  - U.S. Department of State deeply concerned by continued harassment of Pastor "Bike" Zhang and his family. (10-30-2008).
- **Belarus - Protestant Bishop Deported**
  - Ukrainian founder of largest charismatic church deported because of religious activity. (10-30-2008).

Oh may God stir within us a passion to pursue the way of the cross. We must not, we cannot see the cross as a simple sidebar or subplot; **the cross is the foundation on which and from which the Christian life is lived.**

### **Shepherding the Sheep** (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. How might we evaluate ourselves in light of these passages?
2. How do we "reconcile" this passage with our own Christian life and the various relationships we are a part of?
3. May God use this time to awaken us to His Story and how we are a part of it. May this time be a time of deepening and growth.
4. What does this story cause us to change in our thinking and/or actions?
5. What application can we make from this text?
6. THINK, CHOOSE, FEEL.