

Matthew 16:13-26

¹³Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*”

¹⁴And they said, “*Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.*”

¹⁵He said to them, “*But who do you say that I am?*”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.**”

¹⁷And Jesus answered him,

“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.

¹⁸*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*

¹⁹*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

²¹***From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.***

²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “*God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.*”

²³But he turned and said to Peter, “***Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.***”

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples,

“If any want to become my followers,

let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

²⁵***For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.***

²⁶***For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?***

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship (p.99)

The cross is laid on every Christian.

The first Christ-suffering which every one must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old self which is the result of his encounter with Christ.

As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death.

Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a person, he bids him come and die.

It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him.

Or it may be a death like Luther’s, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world.

But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of our old life at his call – because only the one who is dead-to-his-own-will can follow Christ.

In fact, every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts.

Hudson Taylor, missionary to China, 1800’s

“Self-denial surely means something far greater than some slight and insignificant lessening of our self-indulgences! I have never seen the willingness to suffer and leave God to vindicate His own cause, His own people and their right, where the result has not been beneficial -- if there has been rest and faith in Him.”

And his biographer adds:

It was not until many years later, when Mr. Taylor could look back over all the way in which the Lord had led him, that he was impressed with the fact that every important advance in the development of the Mission had sprung from or been directly connected with times of sickness or suffering which had cast him in a special way upon God

Dave Dravecky, Former baseball player (DR: perhaps too black and white, but powerful food for thought)

Someone once said that the difference between American Christianity and Christianity as it is practiced in the rest of the world *has to do how each views suffering.*

- In America, Christians pray for the burden of suffering to be lifted from their backs.
- In the rest of the world, Christians pray for stronger backs so they can bear their suffering.