

The Cross: From Followers to Traitors

ICE BREAKER QUESTION

Share a time you had to change your plans because of unexpected circumstances. How did you handle it?

WORD

We started a series THE CROSS. In this series, we are doing different character studies of the people that witnessed the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will understand that these characters were changed in some way. At the end of this series we hope to understand that the Cross is foundational to and the centre of everything we do, so that we can be faithful to God's call in our lives.

John 6:66-69 (ESV)

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

The Benefits of Following Jesus (John 6:2-14) **HEALING John 6:2** The crowd followed because of the miraculous healings. John 21:25 says that there are many other things that Jesus did, the whole world wouldn't be big enough if all of the things He has done would be written in a book. **PROVISION** (Feeding of the 5,000) **FREEDOM John 6:14-15:** after the feeding of 5 000, Large crowd most likely remembered Moses' time and manna They hoped Jesus would deliver them from Roman oppression.

DISCUSSION

What did you imagine life with Jesus would be like? What was your “expectation versus reality” moment of following Jesus?

WORD

The Cost of Following Jesus (John 6:60-66)

John 6:35 – “I am the bread of life.” Jesus offers eternal life but asks for full commitment in return. The teaching got hard, they couldn't follow it anymore. The large crowd said the words in John 6:60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” And their actions recorded in John 6:66 .

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. The teaching got hard, when Jesus said all of these things. Some of these people in the large crowd perhaps literally interpreted what Jesus said when He told them to eat of His flesh and drink of His blood.

But what He really meant on this was not on the physical aspect of it but on the spiritual aspect of it. When He said this, He was calling the large crowd to fully embrace His sacrifice and rely on Him as the source of eternal life. It meant surrendering everything to Him, allowing His life and teachings to transform us completely.

What happens when we surrender to Him completely? What are examples of the costs? Sacrifices, time, maybe some need to leave their livelihoods in order to follow Jesus or full time ministry, relationships, pruning of relationships that weren't glorifying God, rejection and persecution, sacrificed ambitions. Knowing now that there is a cost when they follow Jesus, the crowd grumbles and abandons Him. Then later on the story the very same crowd that was relentless following Jesus. Is the same crowd that shouted the words: “CRUCIFY HIM!, CRUCIFY HIM!”

Why did the large crowd abandon Jesus? Simply because the cross is offensive. The flow of our preaching today is different from the other characters that we have discussed and we will discuss in the Cross sermon series. Everyone else was positive, but the large crowd showed the opposite transformation. From followers to traitors. Why so? Because they were offended by the cost of following Jesus. They were offended by the cross. Because the cross is offensive.

How is the cross offensive?

The cross exposes us

- The cross reminds us that we are not just sick, hungry, and oppressed but we're dead with our sins.
- That we need Jesus, who will heal our bodies, provide for our needs, and free us from oppressors.
- YES THE CROSS TELLS US that we are worse than what we like to admit but it also reveals us the greatness of our God.
- The provision that He provides is the bread of life, freely given to us. He will die so that we may live.

The cross tells us we have to die.

- The cross tells us that we need to die for our sins.
- Jesus says "if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it Matthew 16:24-25
- Meaning that we need to lose our old life in order to live with Him.

The cross tells us there is a cost when we follow Jesus.

- We want the benefits of following Jesus Christ, but don't want it to cost us anything, but that is not the message of the cross in our lives.
- The cross demands a complete reorientation of our lives.
- The cross is reminding us that yes the cost of following Jesus is high, but the reward is eternal life with Him.

At the end of this chapter, the large crowd abandoned Jesus, but the 12 disciples remained. The question now that we have to ask before we end this preaching is. How did the Disciples remain faithful?

Surely it was costly for them as well. They had to make sacrifices. They had to leave their livelihoods to go into full time ministry. Some disciples became fishermen to fishers of men. Matthew left his tax collector career to follow Jesus. They gave up financial stability and familiar routines that come with their day job. They left their families and relationships when they traveled with Jesus. They prioritize Jesus over family. They were rejected and persecuted. They risked their lives and eventually lost their lives when they followed Jesus Christ. They sacrificed their personal ambitions. But they remained faithful followers of Jesus Christ because they recognized who Jesus is:

John 6:68 - Peter declared, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." They understood that Jesus is the way the truth and the life. That no one comes to the Father except through Him. That when they follow Jesus there is a cost but they know that He is the only way to the Father. They understood that Jesus was the Holy One of God. They remained faithful followers of Jesus Christ because They trusted in Jesus' words:

The disciples chose to believe Jesus' teachings, even when they didn't fully understand them. Faith involves trusting God beyond human comprehension. That yes we might have to surrender things to Him but it's okay because what we will surrender He will replace it with a much better person, passion, relationship that will glorify Him. They were able to

recognize who Jesus is and trusted in Jesus' words because point number 3. They hold onto their relationship with Jesus. How could they have held onto their relationship with Jesus if they didn't have a relationship with Him? We need to do the same thing we need to have a relationship with Jesus Christ then we will be able to hold onto our relationship with Him and remain faithful to Jesus. Walking closely with Jesus gave them strength to persevere. We need to walk closely with Jesus Christ. Their personal relationship with Him provided the foundation to endure difficult teachings.

THE COST IS HIGH, BUT THE REWARD IS ETERNAL LIFE WITH JESUS

DISCUSSION

How do you think you would respond if no one around you were following Jesus? Is there anything that could keep you from following Jesus? Would you follow Jesus even if it cost you everything?

LIFE APPLICATION

Let us reflect on our expectations of following Jesus. Let us learn the steps to remember His goodness and refocus our faith in spite of challenges that come our way. When we feel isolated, let us learn the step to stand firm in our faith even when others are wavering on faith. Pray for God's guidance and strength to stand firm in faith. Let us go to Jesus and reach out to fellow believers when we are feeling any fears and doubts, when we are hurting and experiencing depression and anxiety. At the cross, Jesus did not only forgive us, redeemed us but delivered us from all our iniquities and transgression.

DISCUSSION

Is there an area in your life where you're tempted to follow the crowd instead of Jesus?

VERSE TO MEDITATE ON

Matthew 27:24-27 ESV

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

PRAYER

Share your prayer request and answered prayer. Pray for one another and throughout this week.



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