



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 16:21-28

KEY POINT(S): Christians have fruit in their lives that match their confession – a life of discipleship and taking up their cross daily to follow Jesus.

FOR LEADERS

- **Weekly Resources** – Our weekly resources (Discussion Guides, Group Videos, Podcasts, etc) are posted for you each week both on the Realm Leader’s Group, as well as our website at emergencenj.org/weeklyresources/!
- **Apprenticeship** – As a group leader, remember that your primary role is to help challenge people in taking their next steps toward Jesus...whatever that may be. For some, this will mean leadership opportunities in their own ministry areas. Be mindful of who is in your group, and look for others you can invest in as potential leaders!
- **“Core” Groups** – We’re introducing a new concept to Communities this year, which we’re calling “Core Groups.” You’ll find out more about the idea behind Core Groups in the coming weeks, but understand that a Core Group is essentially an “inner two or three” that you walk with in a bit more depth than your Community. We recommend that a core group be two or three people close to you, who can challenge you, dive deeper with, hold you accountable, and walk with.

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video** - Watch this week’s *community extras* video.
- [2] Icebreaker** –What the best (or your most favorite) part of your summer this year?
- [3] Opener** – What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon or text this week? Anything particularly eye-opening, helpful, or insightful?

RESTORING PERSPECTIVE

In the sermon this week, Pastor Ryan explained how, sometimes, Christians can end up teaching or saying things that aren’t actually biblical in their zeal to want to spread the good news about Jesus. This can happen, often, when we tell people that all they have to do is “pray a prayer” or make a confession. These things may be a great starting point for a life of discipleship, but it is only a small part of what true conversion looks like.

- [1]** If praying a prayer or saying a confession is only a “part of” becoming a Christian, then what does true conversion actually look like? Do you think this is the same for all people? Explain.
- [2]** In what way(s) do you think that people in our culture, or even in the Church, might minimize the cross when speaking about Jesus?
- [3]** What might be some of the negative effects of telling people that all they have to do to become a child of God is a make a “one-time commitment?” Share any examples you may have seen in your own experience.

Leaders: We should be zealous to share the Gospel – period. If we don’t absolutely long for people to know Jesus and jump at the opportunity to share the good news about Him to someone we love, then there is something absolutely broken in our faith. But, in our zeal to share Jesus with people, we cannot cheapen the gospel by making it a “one-time payment of only a couple sentences of words!” Jesus isn’t calling us to acknowledge that He existed a long time ago, or died for us, or that Heaven is really a nice place to be. He didn’t come to earth and shed His blood in your place and mine so that we could raise our hand in the back of a dark room while no one is looking and then go about our daily lives. Jesus is calling us to die. To put to death everything we think we know and relinquish everything we want, desire, understand and cling to in favor of something far, far better. The Christian life isn’t one time a few years ago, it’s every day.





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KINGDOM WON BY A SUFFERING SAVIOR

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 16:21-23.

In the first part of this week’s passage, Jesus redefines what it means to be the Christ. He’s not the king who will come to crush the Romans and lead his people to political domination. He’s the king who will suffer and die and be raised. This was a radical way of thinking, and Peter’s initial response, not surprisingly, is resistance. As we saw in the book this week, the exchange between Jesus and Peter is striking because it’s more or less the exact opposite of what happened last week. The same disciple who proclaimed truth about Jesus now refuses to believe the words coming out of his Lord’s mouth, and rather than commending him for it, Jesus issues the strongest rebuke possible: “Get behind me, Satan!”

- [4] Why do you think Jesus uses such strong language here in his rebuke to Peter?
[5] In what way is Peter’s language to Jesus similar to what Jesus experienced earlier during his time fasting in the desert? Use Matthew chapter 4 to help you.
[6] Why is the cross and Jesus’ resurrection necessary for the establishment of God’s Kingdom? Why does Jesus have to die? Couldn’t God just snap His fingers and be done with it?

Leaders: Jesus’ language to Peter is strong here because Peter is actually tempting him with the very same thing that Satan did – The Kingdom with the cross. Little does Peter know how treacherous his own words are to Jesus, even as well-intended as they may have been. In truth, Peter really has no idea about how Jesus will advance His Kingdom. He doesn’t understand why Jesus needs to die, and sometimes, neither do we. “If God is all powerful, then why did Jesus have to die?” we ask. “Or couldn’t Jesus just forgive sin without having to shed His blood?” These questions are indeed important for us to ask. And the answer, put simply, is that our sin is more egregious than we can possibly fathom. There is consequence for our sin – spiritual death – and it must be paid. And it’s exactly because of this that Jesus goes to the cross – for us and because of us, and, in Peter’s case, despite us. Jesus’ blood is the only thing that is powerful enough to actually pay for sin. Jesus’ question in Matthew 16 is an important one; What can a man trade for his soul? Absolutely nothing.

KINGDOM ADVANCED BY SUFFERING DISCIPLES

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 16:24-28.

- [7] What do you think Jesus means in verse 25 when He says, “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it?” Have you ever seen examples of this? If so, where?
[8] We live in a culture that exalts the worship of self (“be the best version of you!”) far over worship of God. In what way(s) is this thinking deceptive? How would you respond to someone who tells you this?
[9] Ryan challenged us with two questions this week: “Have I been bought by something of this world that I treat as more valuable than my soul?” and “What do I love today that God hates?” What have you learned about yourself reflecting on these questions?

Leaders: Jesus’ statement in Matthew 16:25 reflects all the way back to Genesis when man was created. What is it that we truly desire? Do we want to worship God, have inherit His Kingdom, or would we rather worship ourselves as God and try to create our own Kingdom? The choice is ours, but Jesus is making quite clear that we should choose carefully, because it will cost us our soul.

PRAYER

- [1] Pray that God would make Jesus more precious in your eyes than anything of this world.

