**Can You Carry Your Cross?**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Matthew 10:35-42**

**Wednesday Evening**

**June 23, 2021**

**Matthew 10:35-42**

35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'

37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

**35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'**

Saints, Jesus was quoting from Micah 7:6. In Micah, these divisive conditions led to a yearning for the Messiah; in this context they were caused by the Messiah’s coming.

**Micah 7:5-7**

5 Do not trust in a friend; Do not put your confidence in a companion; Guard the doors of your mouth From her who lies in your bosom. 6 For son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household. 7 Therefore I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me.

Jesus explained the response to his call—there will inevitably be conflict between those who respond and those who do not. Sometimes the reaction is violent, and angry family members become like enemies. Jesus did not come to make such divisions happen; instead, his coming, his words, and his call inevitably will cause conflict between those who accept him and those who reject him.

**Though None Go With Me, Still I Will Follow**

I have decided to follow Jesus,

I have decided to follow Jesus.

I have decided to follow Jesus;

no turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me, still I will follow,

though none go with me, still I will follow.

Though none go with me, still I will follow;

no turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me,

the world behind me, the cross before me.

The world behind me, the cross before me;

no turning back, no turning

**37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**

Saints, Jesus did not force his followers to break family ties to follow him (as opposed to some present-day cults). Jesus was pointing out that his disciples must have singular loyalty to him. When discipleship conflicts with family loyalty, following Jesus must take the priority over natural love of family. If one must choose, one must take Jesus.

**Luke 9:23-26**

23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

Saints, in order to even consider to take up your cross you must first be His disciples!

**John 8:30-32**

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

**38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**

Saints, these words applied to the disciples and to all who want to be worthy of Jesus (“worthy” meaning willing to follow and serve. To take up your cross was a vivid illustration of the humility and submission that Jesus asked of his followers.

When Jesus used this picture of his followers taking up their crosses to follow him, the people knew what it meant. For some, taking up the cross might indeed mean death; for all, it means denying self.

**Galatians 5:24-26**

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

**Romans 6:6-9**

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

**Ephesians 4:22-24**

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

To follow Christ is a moment-by-moment decision, requiring denial of self. Following Jesus means taking the same road of sacrifice and service that he took. The blessing for us is that he walks with us along the way.

**39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**

Saints, this verse is a positive and negative statement of the same truth: Clinging to this life may cause us to forfeit the best from Christ in this world and in the next. The Christian life is a paradox:

1. To attempt to find (or save) your life means only to lose it. A person who “finds” his or her life to satisfy desires and goals apart from God ultimately “loses” life.

Not only does that person lose the eternal life offered only to those who believe and accept Christ as Savior, but he or she loses the fullness of life promised to those who believe.

By contrast, those who willingly “lose” their lives for the sake of Christ actually “find” them. They will receive great reward in God’s Kingdom.

2. To lose one’s life for Christ’s sake refers to a person refusing to renounce Christ, even if the punishment were death. It would be easier to give one’s life in battle or in martyrdom than what Christ actually asks of us. Not only does Christ demand loyalty over family, he also demands loyalty over every part of our life. The more we love this life’s rewards (leisure, power, popularity, financial security), the more we will discover how empty they really are.

The best way to “find” life, therefore, is to loosen our greedy grasp on earthly rewards so that we can be free to follow Christ. We must risk pain, discomfort, conflict, and stress. We must acknowledge Christ’s claim over our destiny and our career. In doing so, we will inherit eternal life and begin at once to experience the benefits of following Christ.

**40 "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."**

Saints, Jesus described how the disciples should go about their ministry—staying in homes of worthy people. Those who would welcome the disciples would receive great reward. The word “welcomes” may refer both to hospitality (receiving the messenger) as well as conversion (receiving the message).

Jesus’ representatives carry all his authority. Those who welcome the disciples welcome Jesus; those who welcome Jesus welcome the Father who sent Jesus. Again Jesus unmistakably claims his relationship to God. Jesus spoke these words to his twelve disciples, but then repeated the saying three more times using prophets, righteous people, and little ones.

To give a cup of cold water was an important act of courtesy and hospitality. The disciples definitely were “little ones” who were insignificant and despised in the eyes of the world. Those who would welcome the disciples merely because they were disciples would not lose their reward. Because the disciples would come with God’s authority, their acceptance by people would test the people’s attitudes toward God. It is that attitude that leads either to reward or loss of reward.

**1 Kings 17:8-24 (New Century Translation)**

8 Then the Lord spoke his word to Elijah, 9 “Go to Zarephath in Sidon and live there. I have commanded a widow there to take care of you.”

10 So Elijah went to Zarephath. When he reached the town gate, he saw a widow gathering wood for a fire. Elijah asked her, “Would you bring me a little water in a cup so I may have a drink?” 11 As she was going to get his water, Elijah said, “Please bring me a piece of bread, too.”

12 The woman answered, “As surely as the Lord your God lives, I have no bread. I have only a handful of flour in a jar and only a little olive oil in a jug. I came here to gather some wood so I could go home and cook our last meal. My son and I will eat it and then die from hunger.”

13 “Don’t worry,” Elijah said to her. “Go home and cook your food as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread from the flour you have, and bring it to me. Then cook something for yourself and your son. 14 The Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘That jar of flour will never be empty, and the jug will always have oil in it, until the day the Lord sends rain to the land.’”

15 So the woman went home and did what Elijah told her to do. And the woman and her son and Elijah had enough food every day. 16 The jar of flour and the jug of oil were never empty, just as the Lord, through Elijah, had promised.

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. He grew worse and worse and finally stopped breathing. 18 The woman said to Elijah, “Man of God, what have you done to me? Did you come here to remind me of my sin and to kill my son?”

19 Elijah said to her, “Give me your son.” Elijah took the boy from her, carried him upstairs, and laid him on the bed in the room where he was staying. 20 Then he prayed to the Lord: “Lord my God, this widow is letting me stay in her house. Why have you done this terrible thing to her and caused her son to die?” 21 Then Elijah lay on top of the boy three times. He prayed to the Lord, “Lord my God, let this boy live again!”

22 The Lord answered Elijah’s prayer; the boy began breathing again and was alive. 23 Elijah carried the boy downstairs and gave him to his mother and said, “See! Your son is alive!”

24 “Now I know you really are a man from God,” the woman said to Elijah. “I know that the Lord truly speaks through you!”

**Let's Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace." '**