

THE CROSS BEFORE HIM // Luke 18:31-34

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

Like the previous passage, these verses from Luke 18 also hearken back to the demands of discipleship from Luke 14:26. This time, the connection is to the demand that disciples deny themselves and take up their cross. In Luke 18, Jesus will predict his own death for the third time in the gospel of Luke (the first two predictions were 9:22 and 9:44, nearly a year before their fulfillment, and his coming death is also referenced throughout the travel narrative of Luke in 12:50, 13:32, and 17:25). These predictions emphatically demonstrate both that Jesus was determined to die and his death had been determined. His death by crucifixion was not an accident. It was planned and intended by both Jesus and God the Father as the means by which atonement would be made for sinful humanity. To be Jesus' disciple means to follow him, even to the cross.

Main Idea: Discipleship is a death march.

Unless you deny yourself, you cannot be a disciple. You cannot detach death from discipleship.

1. Death determined (v. 31) The travel narrative is coming to a close. Jesus took all twelve disciples purposefully to remind them that he is calling them to come with him—to Jerusalem and to the cross. The disciples think they know why they are going to Jerusalem at this time: for the Passover. What they don't understand is that Jesus is the Passover—he is the sacrificial lamb. All the prophecies of the Old Testament are pointing to the death of Jesus. Psalm 22 becomes a rubric for the crucifixion. The whole Bible is one story, and Jesus is the hero.

2. Death described (v. 32-33) In describing the death he is facing, Jesus uses seven verbs in a sequential order. The first four are passive—Jesus will be delivered, mocked, shamefully treated, and spit upon. The last three are active—the soldiers will flog and kill him, and he will rise again. The description paints a picture of a real human who died a real death and was really raised again. We see the striking fact that you cannot hate Jesus enough that he won't love you back. Jesus' motivation is twofold: to bring glory to God and to love his people. We understand the demands of discipleship. The issue is, do we believe it is worth it?

3. Death detached (v. 34) If you detach death from discipleship, you cannot be a disciple. Why did the disciples not understand the things Jesus was telling them? Possibly God had not revealed it to them yet. But, ultimately, understanding is not enough. The devil understands the passage and doesn't mind if you do, too...as long as you don't apply it. The greatest mistake we could make would be to detach death from discipleship. We need more death marches. As D.L. Moody said, "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it look like to walk a death march? What does it mean to deny yourself in your own life?
2. Why is it important to recognize that Jesus' death was not accidental, that it had been predetermined by God from eternity past?
3. How does the description of Jesus' death impact our understanding of what true discipleship means?