

CARRY HIS CROSS // LUKE 23:26-31

From the series, The Gospel of Luke

Long before he faces crucifixion, Jesus taught on what it meant to carry a cross. In Luke 9:23, he asserts that if anyone is to follow him, he must deny himself and take up his cross. In Luke 14, he teaches that unless you bear your cross, you cannot be a disciple. Jesus is teaching that cross-bearing is not merely living in a fallen world where difficulties face believers and nonbelievers alike. Rather, cross-bearing means self-denial.

Main Idea: Simon of Cyrene gives an illustration of the truth of Luke 9 and 14—discipleship means to carry the cross.

1. Simon of Cyrene (v. 26-27)

Simon is a foreigner, a man from Cyrene (modern-day Libya). He is outside the ethnic community, but a Jew by belief and in Jerusalem for the Passover festival. When Simon is “seized” by the soldiers to carry the cross for Jesus, it’s easy to see this as a case of “wrong place, wrong time.” However, we recognize that in God’s sovereignty, circumstance is never happenstance. Simon is in exactly the right place at the right time.

Simon’s experience illustrates the truths of discipleship:

a. Discipleship is a clear rejection of our inner man. We don’t know if Simon had a choice in the matter of obeying the soldiers to carry the cross, but it is something he commits to doing. We don’t get to pick the times when we are called to carry our cross.

b. Discipleship is a daily surrender to the service of Christ. Simon was carrying the instrument that would kill Jesus so that Simon could be free. In Mark, Simon is identified as the father of Alexander and Rufus, which suggests that these sons might be known to readers. There is an implication that Simon’s household became followers of Christ. Simon followed Jesus, and his sons followed Simon in following Jesus.

c. Discipleship is a long obedience in the same direction. Simon is following Jesus, taking his orders from his steps. As Bonhoeffer said, the cross defines each step of the way; and to carry a cross is to walk toward death. A man seen carrying a cross is usually not coming back.

2. The daughters of Jerusalem (v. 28-31)

Luke singles out women for attention throughout his gospel account. The women mentioned here may be professional mourners or women who followed Jesus. Three statements help us understand their inclusion here:

a. Jesus is thinking of the heinous nature of his own rejection and their sin. Jesus tells them, “do not weep for me” (v. 28). He did not die for sympathy, he died to take your place. Weep for yourself.

b. Jesus is pointing to ominous catastrophe waiting for Jerusalem (v. 29). The city will be destroyed in AD 70. There is coming a time when there will be no refuge *from* Jesus; the only refuge will be *in* Jesus. Jesus is the green wood (v. 31).

c. Jesus is calling for an apocalyptic reversal. There is coming a day when God’s wrath will be poured out on sinful humanity. It will be better to die under the mountains (v. 30) than to experience what is coming (Isaiah 2:19; Hosea 10:18; Revelation 6:16). Jesus is likely referring to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in AD 70.

Again, there will be refuge *from* God. There will only be refuge *in* God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it look like to deny our self in day to day life?
2. How can we be encouraged as we practice both daily surrender and long obedience?
3. What does it mean to find no refuge *from* God, but refuge *in* God?