

Series: Jesus Among Us
Title: When Dying Means Living Part I
Text: Luke 9:18–27

Last week Pastor Frank did a great job challenging us from Lukes account of Jesus Among Us and he **left us off with the same question** that Jesus asked His disciples... **“Who Do You Say That I Am”** ... and intentionally left that questioning **lingering** for you to consider this all week in preparation for where we’ll continue today!

As we’ve been walking through Luke’s Gospel together, have you noticed how **Jesus has a way of taking** what you “think” the text is all about ... and showing its usually about **much more than** the obvious!

Today’s text is a perfect example of that... very familiar verse

Luke 9:23 (ESV)

23 And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Now, when you hear those words, what immediately comes to mind?

We think about? **Sacrifice. Suffering. Giving things up. Dying to ourselves.**

And listen, those things are absolutely there! I dare not attempt to remove them from what Jesus is teaching.

But I wonder if sometimes we’re so focused on what Jesus is calling us to die to that we completely miss what He’s inviting us to live for!

Because there’s something absolutely beautiful in this passage that I think gets missed in the context of those hard words...

Jesus doesn’t simply say, “Deny yourself and take up your cross.”

He says, **“Deny yourself, take up your cross daily ... AND FOLLOW ME!”**

Don’t miss those last three words!... Because that’s where this whole thing is going!

Jesus isn’t calling us to death for the sake of death.

He’s calling us to die to the life that once ruled us so that we can experience the life that only He can give us!

Here’s the deal, following Jesus “IS” life after death!

Title of our message: When Dying Means Living

Pastor Frank gave us the context of where we’re going today last week...

Jesus is **praying alone**, the disciples were with him and Jesus asked them the same question Herod and others began wondering who is this?

Luke 9:18b–20 (ESV)

18b “Who do the crowds say that I am?” **19** And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.” **20** Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

1. When Confession Becomes Commitment

We see that people then, are no different than people today, everyone had a different understanding of who Jesus was!

As you saw in the **video last week**, some thought he was a **good teacher, moral teacher, prophet, religious leader**... the disciples were giving Jesus the same response that we saw in the video last week ...

But Jesus **wasn't interested** so much in what “**THEY**” said about Him ... he continues by making the question personal: “**But who do YOU** say that I am?”

Peter recognizes that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the One sent by God... and this understanding didn't come from Peter's intelligence ... in fact, Matthew's account of this scene in his Gospel captures a little more of the dialogue:

Matthew 16:16–18 (ESV)

16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (explain).”

But from Luke's accounting of this moment, he's intentionally emphasizing something in this scene that didn't need to include this statement from Jesus (Beauty of the Gospels)

In Luke's account, immediately following Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah, “The Christ of God” ... Jesus immediately begins explaining something the disciples were not expecting.

Luke 9:22 (ESV)

22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

Wait a minute! Peter has just confessed that Jesus is the Messiah... and now Jesus is talking about suffering? Rejection? Death?

That wasn't the picture of the Messiah many people had in mind. They were expecting victory, power, deliverance, and the restoration of Israel ... **BUT Jesus is telling them that before the glory comes the suffering... Before the resurrection there's going to be a cross!** But notice something else.... **Jesus doesn't stop by explaining what His own mission will involve. He immediately turns to the cost of following Him!**

Don't miss this: **Following Peter's confession of Jesus comes the cost of committing to Jesus! You cannot separate your confession of Jesus from your commitment to Jesus.**

It's one thing to say, “Jesus is Lord.” ... It's another thing to live as though He actually is!

It's one thing to say, "Jesus is my Savior." It's another thing to surrender the direction of your life to His Lordship.

What we believe about Jesus should increasingly influence how we live for Jesus. And I think that's the question this passage presses upon every one of us.

Not simply, "Do I know the right answer about who Jesus is?"

But, **"Is what I say about Jesus reflected in the way I'm following Jesus?"**

Because Jesus is about to explain that following Him involves something deeply personal.

Something costly... **and ultimately, something incredibly life-giving!**

2. When Surrender Becomes Daily

Luke 9:23 (ESV)

23 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

There are three clear parts to this invitation:

Deny yourself Take up your cross daily. Follow Me.

And we need to understand what Jesus meant when He said these words.

When Jesus mentions a cross, they knew what that meant!

Today, we often associate the cross with **beauty**. We see it on people's **necks**, **tattooed** on their bodies, hangs in **churches**, and in our **homes**. It's a fitting symbol of Jesus's accomplishments for our salvation.

But that's not what the disciples would have pictured when Jesus first said these words.

In the first century, the cross was an instrument of Roman execution. It represented humiliation, shame, suffering, torture and death.

When someone was condemned to crucifixion, they could be forced to carry the crossbeam toward the place of execution.

A man "carrying a cross" wasn't heading toward a difficult afternoon. He was heading toward the end of his life. He wasn't going to rearrange his priorities and return to life as usual... He was going to die.

And that's the picture Jesus places before His disciples.

If you're going to follow Me, you must be willing to surrender your life **completely to Me**.

Interestingly, Jesus says this before He Himself goes to the cross.

The disciples knew what crucifixion was, but they didn't yet fully understand what Jesus was about to accomplish through His own death and resurrection.

The cross Jesus called them to **and** the One He would bear, **were very different!**

Jesus carried His cross to redeem us... We carry ours because we've been redeemed!

His death accomplished something ours never could. Jesus bore the penalty of our sin. Jesus accomplished our salvation. Jesus reconciled us to God.

Our cross-bearing doesn't add **anything** to His finished work. Our cross is **our response** to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Notice the personal language Jesus uses.

He says, "Let him deny himself and take up **HIS** cross." His cross. **Not** Jesus' cross. Not **somebody** else's cross. His **own** cross.

Here's the point: while the call to surrender is to all of us, the **specifics** in which that surrender is expressed are deeply unique to each individual!

Now I'm not saying what's sinful for one, isn't sinful for another, sin is sin ... **but the way that sin manifests itself** in our behaviors are going to be unique to each individual!

IOW: the **selfishness** I struggle with may not look exactly like the selfishness you struggle with. (As if). My **pride** may be different from the things that challenge yours.

And so the cost of following Jesus may be different in each of our lives.

The call is the same. But the places where our surrender, our need to take up our cross, is unique to each individual!

Just to be clear: Not every hardship we experience is automatically our cross.

Having a **difficult boss** isn't necessarily carrying your cross.

Having a **medical problem** isn't automatically carrying your cross.

Dealing with **difficult circumstances** isn't necessarily carrying your cross.

The cross Jesus is talking about **is connected to our allegiance to Him.**

It's the surrender and sacrifice that come **because** we have chosen to follow Jesus... **AND IT'S DAILY!**

That's the Word Jesus uses that I don't want us to miss: Daily!

"Take up his cross DAILY." Not **once**. Not **occasionally**. Not just when we're **at church**. Not just when we're **at a retreat and** feeling especially spiritual... **Daily!**

And that's where the challenge really comes? Because most of us can remember moments when we made significant decisions to surrender something to the Lord.

Maybe it was when we **first** trusted Christ.

Maybe it was at a **conference** or a **retreat**.

Maybe it was **during a difficult season** when God really got our attention... And those moments matter!

But Jesus isn't simply describing a **moment** of surrender. **He's describing a lifestyle of surrender.**

Luke 9:24 (ESV)

24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

The true follower of Jesus is called to live in the reality of his or her new identity.

Yesterday's surrender doesn't eliminate today's need for obedience.

You can surrender your pride on Sunday and find yourself struggling with it again on Monday!

You can decide to trust God with your future today and wake up tomorrow trying to take control all over again! **And that's why Jesus says daily.**

So what does that actually look like?

What does it look like to pick up our cross on a **Tuesday** morning? In our **marriages**? In our **families**? At **work**? In our **relationships**?

In our third point I want to give you 5 practical ways in which this happens:

3. When Dying Becomes Living! (5 practical ways we can take up our cross daily)

1. When My Way Gives Way To His Will

Let's start here because I think this is where **so much of our struggle begins**. We like to be in control! We like making our plans. We like deciding how things are going to go. We like knowing what's next.

And if we're being truthful, we especially like it when God agrees with what we've already decided!

But following Jesus means surrendering the right to rule our own lives.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (ESV)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Notice it doesn't say, "Trust in the Lord when His plans make sense to you."
It says trust Him with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding.

That means there are going to be times when following Jesus requires obedience even when we don't fully understand what He's doing.

Sometimes dying to ourselves means surrendering a perfectly reasonable preference because God is calling us to something different.

Sometimes it means trusting Him when the outcome isn't clear.
Sometimes it means saying yes to something we would never have chosen on our own.

And here's the question: **Am I willing to obey Jesus even when His will interrupts my plans?**

Because when my way gives way to His will, something beautiful happens. **My life begins to reflect His leadership.** And that's what following Jesus looks like. ... here's another way...

2. When My Pride Gives Way To His Humility

Now, this one hits close to home for all of us because **pride doesn't always** look like arrogance.

Sometimes pride looks like needing to have the last word or refusing to apologize.

Sometimes it looks like needing people to know how much we've done or the need to be recognized.

Sometimes it looks like being unwilling to admit that we were wrong ... and even harder, acknowledging the other person is right!

And you know what's interesting? We can justify almost all of it! We tell ourselves, "I'm just standing up for myself." "I'm just telling the truth." "They need to understand my side." ... And sometimes those things may be appropriate.

But sometimes, if we're willing to be honest, **it's not righteousness we're defending... it's our pride!**

Philippians 2:3 ESV

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,
but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

And then Paul continues in that verse to the Philippians by pointing us to Jesus. The One who humbled Himself. The One who took the form of a servant.
The One who became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Think about that... **The Son of God humbled Himself to serve sinful people. And sometimes we struggle to say: "I'm sorry."**

Sometimes the cross we need to carry shows up in a conversation with our spouse **or** when someone corrects us **or** when someone else gets the credit **or** when we have every opportunity to promote ourselves, but instead choose to serve.

And when my pride gives way to His humility, people begin to see something of Jesus in me.

And isn't that what we want? Not that people would be impressed with us. But that they would see Christ through us!