

DO YOU HAVE THE TIME?  
“Time to Give Up”  
2nd Sunday of Lent  
February 25, 2018  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Mark 8:31-38 (NRSV) Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

<sup>31</sup>Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,<sup>[a]</sup> will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words<sup>[b]</sup> in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Last week we started the sermon series called “Do You Have the Time.” We were challenged, to “take charge” from the things that distract us (like the notifications that come from our cell phones) and to have deliberate time with God.

Today’s Scripture reading is one of the more difficult ones for me to “unpack.” I’d like us to focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> half about taking up our crosses...and work through it with you this morning.

The DELIBERATE time we spent with God this week is going to come to good use as we figure out setting aside OUR desires FOR GOD’S DESIRES

We talked some, last week, about Lent including OUR choices about things to give up OR things to TAKE up that bring us into a closer walk in God’s purpose.

While this series suggests referencing cell phone apps, I think the challenge is clear even for those of us who enjoy an “old-fashioned” wall calendar to keep our schedules. Or the piece of paper stuck to the frig’ with a magnet that holds our to-do list.

I have a note pad app in my phone where I keep lists for groceries or items I want to bring to the Food Pantry, and reminders of things to get done on Wednesday.

Is it possible that those lists we have on the frig' or in our phones (or in our hearts) could be another of Satan's roadblocks to keep us "busy" for the wrong reasons?

Kinda snaps our heads around, doesn't it?

The first verses in today's passage have Jesus rebuking Peter...after Peter had rebuked Jesus.

Do you ever notice that when someone, besides JESUS, rebukes it doesn't turn out well?

Peter had a strong opinion about what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah and that opinion didn't include suffering and dying (that Jesus just foretold)!

So Peter spoke...in a way that was unheard of a disciple speaking to the Teacher!

Peter is OUT OF LINE.

And Jesus REBUKED!

Many of us know good teachers who can use a moment of discipline as a teaching moment...for everyone around.

So, our Good Teacher, Jesus, calls together the other disciples and the crowd to give THEM ALL an important summary of what *discipleship* is all about.

*"If any want to be my followers, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me.*

I'm going to bring this to US (Jesus teaching US) as we review these words from Scripture.

Jesus is clear.

If we're going to claim to **BE FOLLOWERS** of Jesus, we're going to have to take our personal desires off the list.

We're going to have to invest in God's work for the world.

Jesus wants us to know this up front.

And while many of us have been on this journey our whole lives long, it is NOT too late to reset; to be sure that we ARE aware what is required, even demanded of us, as followers of Jesus Christ.

So, let's think about the things on OUR to-do lists.

Why we're doing them?

Are they things that NEED to be done and that we have a clear **calling** to do?

Or are the desires driven by our egos and need for self-gratification?

Are we looking to get credit for doing something?

Is it for money?

What's on our lists?

Jesus wants us to understand that the path WE SHOULD BE ON is different.

Now, that DOESN'T mean that we intentionally put ourselves out there to be beaten **up** or put **down**.

But, it does mean that we will try to take God more seriously than we take ourselves.

*Earlier this week, the Upper Room devotional shared a story from a dad who said he'd been like "King Kong" when his kids were attracted to things that they shouldn't be touching. He said, "I'd rip the item out of their fingers and give them a look SO they wouldn't pick that item up again."*

*His wife, he said, had a different approach. She offered the kids something MORE attractive to be interested in. The kids would let go of the nasty item and take the new one.*

Jesus uses that approach with us.

It's easy to focus on, center our lives on, **our** wants.

- ❖ But Jesus is offering the riches of his kingdom...if we'll only let go of our desires.
- ❖ Jesus gives us the gift of something eternal; something much more valuable than anything we'd desire in this life.

And, I'm going to toss this out: Living more like Christ is more *natural* than the reality of our humanity. Living like Christ is more natural and in-tune with how God created us.

- ❖ When we learn to live for God's purposes and by God's methods... we'll see that God's purposes are filled with God's promises and God's methods have miraculous results!
- ❖ When we "deny ourselves and take up our cross" and don't just *believe* IN Jesus but believe LIKE Jesus, our purpose, principles, values and ethics will be oriented in powerful, empowered ways!

Are you willing to remove some things from YOUR list of desires and be open to BEING the answer to many of your own prayers?

Take up the cross.

Are you ready to believe that the Way of Jesus will open you up to a more intimate relationship with God?

Take up the cross.

Are you ready to reflect the love and sacrifice Jesus made for YOU in your home, neighborhood, church and community?

Take up THE cross!

"We must be willing to let go of the life **we** planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us." (credit: Joseph Campbell)

Old Peter, Jesus' lieutenant in the new order, sure as heck didn't see what Jesus was preparing to do as HIS plan! Jesus had a different agenda.

As 21<sup>st</sup> century disciples, lieutenants if you will, we aren't (most likely) going to have to lose our lives like 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians or 20<sup>th</sup> century civil rights activists to follow Jesus.

BUT: it is no less real to think that a church (and the people that make up that church) that is focused on SAVING its own life **will** lose it.

If we spend too much energy or too much of the resources of people and money and are NOT empowering outreach to encourage other disciples for Jesus Christ to help us transform the world; we're losing our life.

We EACH need to be PART OF a living church that seeks out new members to the Family, not to meet quotas prescribed "somewhere."

Losing our lives, for the sake of living in the purpose of God is NOT DYING.  
It's not martyrdom.

In fact, the word "martyr" is a Greek word that actually means "witness." Huh!  
Puts a whole new perspective on things doesn't it?

What does a witness do?

They tell the truth of what they've seen or heard...no.matter.what.

And our testimony, the truth we tell, is that the changes we have made OR ARE MAKING in our lives, to live what we believe...have brought us NEW life.

We believe in a NEW world that isn't built on self-preservation, power, wealth and immediate gratification.

We're willing, aren't we Disciples? We're willing to commit our old lives to death, to release those lives, and enter into life with God, doing God's purpose, with God's methods....'cause it's there that we discover abundance, vibrant sharing, peace-making, justice-bringing, and love.

Are you willing to give up trying to "save your life?"

Take up the cross.

Are you open to a commitment to lose your life so that you can find more a more full life?

Take up the cross.

Are you willing to let go of YOUR life and open yourself to receive God's life?  
Then, "take up the cross," Jesus said, "and FOLLOW ME."

Thanks be to God!

Amen.