

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Who do people say I am?”

28 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

29 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.**32** He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **35** For whoever wants to save their life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.**36** What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? **37** Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **38** If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Consequences

“For every action there are equal and opposing reactions.” One would think that’s obvious because what Newton was saying was for every action there is a consequence. That’s the way the world works. Everything you do or don’t do has a consequence. For instance, If you stick your finger in the light socket you will be met with a shock. If you don’t water the plants in a garden they won’t grow. There are consequences to actions. Sometimes they’re expected at other times the equal and opposing reaction is unexpected.

Jesus informs his disciples of the unexpected consequences of following him. Peter and the apostles were hoping to find positions of power and authority when Jesus came into his kingdom but instead Jesus hands out crosses, “*Take up your cross and follow me.*” There are consequences to following Jesus. There is a cross. It’s burdensome. It can be

painful. But it also upon this cross that Jesus took upon himself the consequences of our actions and sin.

Jesus also informs us that living in a fallen world as a Christian means there is a cross and it won't be comfortable. While the cross is the greatest gift we could ever receive (we don't get what we deserve or expect we get grace) there are also a consequence of our association with Jesus.

Jesus healed the sick, just performed another miraculous feeding of 4,000, and now Jesus is polling his disciples for the popular opinion. He wants the disciples to understand who he is and what he has come for so he asks, "*Who do the people say I am?*" They respond, ""Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." Jesus can't be John - they were seen together. John pointed to Jesus as, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus is also so much more than a prophet like Elijah. After the wrong answers Jesus asks the twelve, "*And you, who do you say I am?*" And Peter finally gets a question right, "*You are the Christ.*" Whether you hear it in the Hebrew "Messiah" or the Greek "Christ" it means the same thing: the anointed one.

In the Old Testament people were anointed for many reasons sometimes it was medicinal at other times it was the beginning as a prophet or king. So to say Jesus is the anointed one of God meant Jesus is the prophet, priest, or king sent by God for a specific purpose. But up to this point the disciple didn't know what that would mean. They assumed the Messiah would be a political power, a king who would restore Israel but a suffering servant? They still don't understand why and how so they are silenced until the crucifixion. It's the Markan secret. They expect a reaction of some sort for faithfully following Jesus but then Jesus says, "*the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.*" Take up your cross and follow me.

That's not what they expected for their faithful service and hard work. The cross was designed to humiliate and prolong suffering. It was shameful to mention the cross. Cicero the first century orator said, "*the mere name of the cross, should be far removed, not only from the persons of Roman citizens—from their thoughts, and eyes, and ears.*" Crucifixion was a reserved for the lowest of the low sentenced to suffer a most excruciating death for their crimes. Peter pulls Jesus aside and began to rebuke Jesus, "Did you really just say that in front of them? We've left everything to follow you and now you're telling us that as a result of our work - we get crosses?"

Peter wanted health, wealth, happiness. They wanted positions at the left and right of Jesus in his kingdom. They wanted more of the Palm Sunday procession where people

proclaim their praises. Because the consequences of a glorified Jesus are glorified servants. Peter wanted something different than what Jesus had to offer. But Jesus said, “necessary and must happen.” It was necessary because all have sinned and no one is able live a life worthy of earning eternal life. Jesus knew that he had come to give his life as a ransom for all. Jesus knew where he was going. He knew what he was doing. He also knew there would be consequences for those who follow but he still calls to all, “Take up your cross and follow me.”

That doesn't exactly sound all that comforting. We don't like problems or pain. We try to avoid such things. I want a Jesus who heals the sick and calms our fears. But instead we have a Jesus who says, “Take up your cross.” Thankfully Jesus isn't talking about a literal wooden cross but the cross of a Christian.

We sometimes hear people say, “it's my cross to bear.” Sometimes it's true because the Christian cross involves suffering but not every kind of suffering is a cross. All people suffer in this fallen world. People suffer as a consequence of their own actions, their own sin (rob a bank and you are put in prison). People suffer as a consequence of living in a sinful world (earthquakes, hurricanes, and forest fires). But only Christians suffer as a consequence of following Jesus. People suffer because we live in a sinful, fallen world inhabited by sinners who don't know or understand our capacity to do evil. But only Christians are executed in North Korea for owning a Bible. Only Christians lose their heads to the Islamic State. That is the suffering that comes as a consequence of our faith in Jesus. The cross has to do with our enemies: the devil, the world, who attack where God's Word is preached, accepted, believed, and bears fruit.

That means coming to church isn't a cross unless you come in secrecy for fear of being hunted down and killed. That means setting aside a day for worship and bringing children to church isn't a cross unless they begin to ridicule and mock you for your association with Christ. But if we walk away, neglect God's Word in order to avoid our the cross - Jesus warns us, *If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.*”

Christianity is a confession. Not only a confession of what you believe to be true but what actually is true. The Christ came to suffer, die, and rise for sinners. He came for a cross so he could receive the consequences of our disobedience.

That took place throughout his life here on earth and culminated at the cross. Now since the cross is so shameful you would think that the Christian church would want to hide the fact that Jesus was crucified but instead of doing that they made it the center of their worship life. Paul writes, *"I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ... but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the gentiles."* Paul didn't try to please the people, he simply preached the truth that Christ took upon himself the consequences of sin and this is what it cost. Jesus did not die for his own sins as a failed Messiah, but for ours. "Christ died for us." To believe that means denying ourselves. We deny our ability to save ourselves. Denying that we could or can do anything - let alone carry our cross in a way that would lead us to earn eternal life as a consequence of our actions.

Jesus was willing to take up the consequences of associating with sinners. He identified with them. He died for them. This is what held Jesus attention. This is why he spoke of his death. This is the purpose for which he was sent. In Jesus we see the Father's heart, his love for his creation, so much so that he sent his Son.

Jesus wouldn't leave this mission behind. When Peter suggested something like Satan during Jesus temptation in the wilderness, Jesus rebuked him. He didn't tell Peter, "Go to hell Peter." he called him to fall in line, *"Get behind me."* Follow me. Though Peter struggled under the weight of the cross and even walked away from it denying Jesus and any association, "I don't know the man." Jesus returned to Peter pointed him to the cross and motivated him to take up his cross and follow. Peter carried his cross. Later after the ascension, in the book of Acts, Peter is placed in prison for his public confession, *"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* In Acts we see Stephen carry the cross as he is seized and stoned with rocks. Tradition even states that Peter was crucified upside down by Nero. There are consequences. They are connected to Jesus' cross and Jesus' work.

There will be times like Peter when the cross is too heavy for us. There will be times when we throw it down, refuse to move, and sit on our crosses. It's painful, uncomfortable, but it also comforts because Jesus died on this cross for you. Jesus then lovingly gives us the accomplished work and says, "Take this with you."

While Cicero urged his fellow citizens to avert their thoughts from the cross, Jesus calls us to embrace it, take it up, and follow Jesus. Jesus makes it possible for us to take up our crosses. He strengthens us to carry our cross by his promise in baptism, Lord's Supper, and his Word. On the cross, Jesus died to forgive our sin and win us eternal life! That's why

we hang one front and center in church. Here he tells us what he has done. Here he reminds us of his work finished. This is what Christianity is all about.

That means we are forgiven for trying to gain glory for ourselves in this world. We are forgiven for setting aside our confession to simply fit in. We are forgiven not so we can go out and do the same foolishness over again but so we can live a new life. Carry the cross. While Crosses will come and some will carry them not because they have to but because they cannot imagine turning their back on the one who lived, died, and rose for them. We have his cross, his promise, and his Word and although the devil does his best to take away our confidence and tear the cross from us - we have one who will never fail us because Jesus is the Christ crucified for us.

There are consequences. Sometimes it is an equal and opposite reaction to what you do and at other times it's a reaction to what someone else has done. We are saved not because of how faithfully we've carried our crosses but because Jesus faithfully carried his cross and we are connected to his cross. Thanks be to God. Amen.