

INI

St Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Austin, MN, 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
sermon preached on-  
June 23, 2013  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Zechariah 13:7-9; Galatians 3:23-29

Hymns: 390; 245; 421; 453:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 9:18-24

18 And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples  
joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds  
say that I am?"

19 So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say  
Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen  
again."

20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to  
no one, 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 be raised the third day."

23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after  
Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and  
follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

## In Christ Jesus, fellow Redeemed

INTRO: The Search for the Historical Jesus -

has been going on for a long time, actually some would say it has been going on for centuries. To you and me this may sound a bit ludicrous. Why should there be a search for the historical Jesus? Don't we know all we need to know about Jesus from the Scriptural account of the four Evangelists? Doesn't the Bible teach us the truth about Jesus, and who He really was, and what His life was all about? Of course **WE** are convinced of that because the Spirit has worked faith in our hearts, but there are many scholars, Bible scholars and even Christian theologians who are absolutely convinced that the accounts of the four evangelists were manipulated hyperbole. They are convinced that the gospel strive to make Jesus into something He wasn't, to make Jesus more acceptable to the people of those times. You see, we are supposed to understand that people back then were more given to superstition, and mythological stories about the gods of Mt. Olympus, and the children of the gods who were sent down to earth to deliver the people out the different messes they had gotten themselves into. If one views the Scriptural account of Jesus in this light, then one would of course be deceived into thinking that the historical Jesus must be something else, something less than what is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Already BEFORE Jesus was born the spiritual leaders of the Jews had diverged sharply from the inspired record of Holy Scripture regarding the Promised Savior who was to come into the world. The people of the Jews, including the disciples were greatly affected by the teaching of the Jewish spiritual leaders so that their expectations of what the Savior should be were dramatically impacted. The historical Jesus is presented to us **faithfully and accurately** in Holy Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, by the inspired record of the Holy Spirit. What is found by many to be the most offensive aspect of Jesus' life is presented to us by Jesus as the central truth, and key to knowing who Jesus is.

**Theme: Knowing Christ Means Knowing the Cross.**

That starts with knowing **Jesus'** cross.

### **I. Jesus Is the Christ Crucified for Us.**

**Luke 9:18-19** And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" 19 So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again."

This event took place not long the feeding of the 5000, after which Jesus had presented Himself to the crowds as being the Bread of Life, and so the only way to eternal life. The crowds replied that this was "**a hard saying**", and "**many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more**" (John6:60, 66).

Our text tells us that Jesus turned to His Father in prayer. Following this time of prayer Jesus queried the disciples concerning who the crowds said He was. And so the list of answers that were talked up among the people was presented to Jesus. None of those answers were correct. The people were not connecting with the evidence that was before them in Jesus' ministry. They did not see the signs and wonders which Jesus performed as the fulfillment of prophesy concerning the Christ. They recognized that He taught as one having authority, and yet they were not ready to see that His words were the Word of God. They gave Him high marks, supposing Jesus to be one of the prophets come back to life, but not the Christ, the Anointed One that was to come into the world. Why not?

Again it goes back to the long established tradition of the Jews that the Christ would be regal and powerful, and would establish the throne of David, freeing them from the oppression of Rome. The idea of a **spiritual** Savior from sin was not what most of the people expected or desired. Even the disciples, who acknowledged and confessed that Jesus possessed the words of eternal life, were always watching for the time when Jesus would take charge of the nation and establish an earthly kingdom.

Many of the false notions about Jesus are not all that different yet today. Jesus is Lord over all the earth, and yet His mission was not to establish a temporal kingdom upon the earth in which there would be no sickness, or hardship, where people would have all they needed without the necessity of working for their daily bread. No, Jesus' mission in life was not to end crime in the streets, or to establish social justice between the economic classes. Those who desire such a limited savior don't comprehend the real need for salvation that is found in the world. Too many don't see a need for a spiritual Savior because they are convinced that if we all try hard enough we can make ourselves good people, and find our own ways to heaven. All we need is the right example to follow and we can make the world not only a better place, but heaven on earth.

So then Jesus turned once again to the disciples with His question.

**Luke 9:20-22** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." 21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, 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 be raised the third day."

Peter answered for them all, and he answered correctly, "**The Christ of God.**" They understood that Jesus was the Promised One that was to come into the world. What they didn't yet understand and why Jesus commanded them not to tell others about Him, was what Jesus laid out for them in the plainest of terms, the message of the cross. Jesus, the only-begotten of the Father who became incarnate so that He might be our brother, had to be handed over to His enemies. He had to suffer many things. This wasn't just a matter of there being no way of avoiding the power of His enemies, but rather a matter of fulfilling the plan of a gracious God, fulfilling His calling as the Christ. Jesus had to go the cross where He would shed His holy precious blood as the redemptive price for the whole world. It was **necessary** for our salvation that Jesus be **killed**. Only by His death could there be atonement for mankind. Jesus was exactly whom John the Baptist had told them when John said,

**“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)!**

It was only by pouring out His life blood upon the cross that Jesus could be that Sacrificial Lamb who removed our sins from us, who took away all guilt and condemnation. The cross was necessary. It was the fulfillment of who Jesus was and is as the Christ of God!

But Jesus was also quite direct in teaching the disciples that the grave would not hold Him. He told them that the third day He would rise again! And so Jesus who paid the price for our sins also brings us the true life that is ours in resurrection. The cross leads us to the glory of everlasting life, and so Jesus Christ is our Lord, our Savior, our hope of everlasting life.

## **II. As Jesus’ Disciples, We Take up the Cross and Follow Him.**

Jesus made an immediate connection between His redemptive work and the lives of His disciples.

**Luke 9:23-24** Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it

The disciples all had their own fond ambitions. There was more than one occasion upon which the ambition of different disciples became evident as they competed among themselves for honor and privilege before the Lord. They had their own notions of what life should be like for them in this world. And they didn’t see any conflict between their blind ambition, and the willing servitude that was evident in Jesus. They were determined to follow Jesus, but they hadn’t quite yet gotten that “**deny himself**” part of discipleship down pat. That would come later, after Jesus’ resurrection, and even then there would of course be times when they would falter, seeing they were still attached to their sinful flesh.

This is, however, something we also need to comprehend. There is to be a very direct connection between our view of daily life and being a believing child of God. It does take some Christian maturity to really incorporate this truth into life the way we ought to, and even then there are none among us that don't falter at this point of "denying oneself." You see the ambitions and desires of our flesh are pretty strong. We have ideas about what we are going to do with our lives, and how we are going to make our way through life. We have our own picture of what life should be like, and we all enjoy the pleasures of life. When we hear "deny oneself," our flesh recoils. Our flesh says, "**I worked hard to get what I want from life, why should I deny myself?**" There are so many joyous blessing with which the Lord has blessed us that truly our cup overflows. **Goodness and mercy do follow us all the days of our lives** (Psalm 23)! However, with all these blessings the Lord calls upon us to exercise self-control over the **sinful** impulses and desires of our flesh. We need to step back from the carnal pleasures of this life, and the fulfilling the desires of our flesh and from encouraging the pride within ourselves. Yes, it is pride that claims that **this is my life to do with as I wish**. It is pride that orders the priorities of my life to favor the goals of this world rather than seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is sinful pride that takes credit for "knowing enough to be saved that I shall not fall away, and I am living a good enough Christian life that God shall surely receive me into His heavenly mansions."

Only when we deny ourselves do we lay our hands upon the cross. Only when we deny ourselves and confess that we are not worthy of the least of all the grace and goodness which the Lord has given us in life will be ready to serve the Lord. Only when we deny ourselves, that is, say "**NO**" to the desires of our sinful flesh and by the Spirit's power actually exercise the self-control over our lives, resisting sin in our lives, will we be glorifying the Lord and serving Him in our lives. That is when faith will be the ruling power in our lives, and the Spirit will be giving us direction. Then we will be seeking first the righteousness of God and His kingdom in the cross of Christ.

Then we hear the words of the Lord reminding us that a part of discipleship is also found in taking up **our** cross and following Him. Often we are misguided in our thinking to look upon the normal problems and distresses of life as being that cross which Christ would have us bear. Much of the unpleasantness that we encounter in life is common to man and is simply present in our lives because we live in a world that has suffered the ruination of sin. And so we also get sick, or hurt ourselves at work, or at play, or endure the pain of another's unkindness. While all this may be a trial and tribulation for which we need the Lord's help, it is not the cross Christ speaks of in our text.

When we lose opportunities in life, or suffer shame because of our faith, that is our cross. And yes it happens. It happens when we are ridiculed and labeled as ignorant because we believe that God actually created the world in six twenty-four days. It happens when we object to a certain business practice because it takes advantage of another. It happens when we refuse to join an organization that endorses salvation by human works. It happens when we decline to support certain charities that also make a false profession by being aligned with a false church or confession. It happens when we confess that Christ calls sinners to repentance, and does not license the sin and immorality of the world.

Yes, it happens, and though we have not endured to the point of blood as many Christians have, not only in days gone by, but as some in our own day are also called upon to do, we still know and appreciate that the little we endure is to the praise and honor of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us as an offering to God. By the Spirit's abiding grace and power that comes to us through a steady diet of the Gospel we take up our cross joyfully. We join with the apostles who, after being beaten with rods, were "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

**Knowing Christ means knowing the Cross!** We are not ashamed of Christ crucified. We boast in His cross for in His cross we have been redeemed, and through faith in that cross we have peace with God and everlasting life. Knowing Christ means taking up the cross which shall enter our lives also. We

gladly confess the truth of God. Knowing that all Scripture bears witness to the necessity of Christ as our Savior we remain steadfast in our profession. The world will mock and ridicule and even persecute, but we know Christ and the greatness of His love and the wonder of His grace that brings us life and salvation. Led by the Holy Spirit, we shall gladly take up our cross and follow Him.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.