

October 28, 2018

Jesus is my Lord!

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

Matthew 16:24-25

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being found in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being found in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on the cross!"

Philippians 2:3-8

If Jesus is my Lord, then following him or becoming his true disciple defines my whole life. Jesus tells us that anyone who would follow him must first and foremost deny himself. Each of us has a self, present at birth, and driven to survive like any other life form. This self, motivated by the drive to survive, is always self-centered and thus, it is the source of our selfishness and our sin.

Our Master tells us that becoming a disciple who follows him begins with our willingness to deny this self-serving and always selfish part of us. This, of course is no easy task, and so Jesus will give us the next part of his command. As we deny that self-serving part of us we must "...***take up...***" our cross.

In Jesus' day this scene was fairly common. The Roman Empire crucified literally thousands. Seeing the condemned led through town bearing their cross was almost common place. No one in Jesus' day failed to understand that to bear a cross always ended with death on that cross.

So, our Lord is calling us to put that self-serving side of us to death. The Apostle Paul would write, "***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***" (Galatians 2:20) Like the Apostle, Jesus calls us to let our old self-serving side be put to death, and then to live entirely for our Lord.

This kind of life is so much more than attending a few gatherings of a church body. Our Lord is calling us to completely surrender our very existence to him. And, he has shown us what this looks like in his own life. Paul challenges the Philippian believers to have the same attitude that Jesus had. What attitude is this?

The Apostle uses what may have been a popular hymn of that day to show us the way. He writes, "***Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being found in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being found in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on the cross!"***

Jesus gave up being God. He emptied that side of himself for us. He "...***made himself nothing...***" He took on the form, not just of a man, but of a servant, and not just of any servant. As our Master demonstrated to the twelve on the night before his death that he took on the form of the lowest of servants as he washed the feet of the those twelve, including the one who would betray him.

As a servant our Lord became obedient to everything his Father asked of him, even to death on a cross. So, when our Master calls on us to put to death our self-serving existence, surrendering our all to him on our 'cross,' he is calling us to do what he has already done. Following Jesus is all about surrendering our very survival to the God of heaven. When our poured out our Lord and Savior comes in. Then, like Paul, can we honestly claim, "*I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*"

