

Luke 9:18-36

The Kingdom is experienced as we live like Jesus.

This week as Ewen and I were in the car heading from one practice to another, I received a text from an unknown number. "Do this and lose 40lbs. In two weeks!" it said paired with a link.

Now, I know better than to click the link, why would I trust the content of some random unknown number's text?! It sparked a conversation between Ewen and me about whether it is healthy to lose that much weight that quickly... but it left me thinking about believing and acting on the messages we hear.

Who can be trusted? Who should we listen to? Appropriate for our day, we reject authority, claim independence, and run after selfish desires and dreams... we know there is no "I" in team, but there is a "me."

Last week we looked into a faith that trusts and acts - given the provision of Christ and in the same vane in our text for today, Jesus interacts with his disciples and we get the clearest statement of his identity and his unfolding destiny - how they are linked...

We also see confirmation of his identity and what life looks like in light of it, when we listen to him.

This is not easy stuff. It confronts us, it questions our priorities, our allegiances. But it is a window into the point of our existence and his, and that is tremendously good.

Before us, we have a Cruciform Christ and the Cruciform Life.

Cruciform Christ

Cruciform = having the shape of a cross. When Jesus takes on this shape it shatters expectations and surprises us.

A bit of history to help us - Jesus is doing ministry among people that have been waiting for a King. One promised in Scripture as the Messiah, the anointed One. The son of David who would come and make things right, establish his reign forever, and give the people a permanent place with him. A chosen One who would come and lead God's people forever.

Christ=Messiah

Every time there was a new leader with a bright future, people would wonder if this is him. Each generation waiting, wondering, hoping. Longing for a King finally worth following.

There is something of our humanity that longs for this...

Every presidential election of my life has been billed as "the most important election in our nation's history." Well except 1996, that was pretty boring.

The arrival of the Christ (Messiah) is the most important event - don't want to miss it.

In his ministry, this has been the talk. Is Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah? There have been miracles, a rejection of the status quo. He has granted the forgiveness of sin, and shown himself to have authority over creation.

"Who is this?" Is the common refrain. And now people are starting to guess.

"While he was praying in private, with his disciples..." Jesus always does something huge when praying!

He asks the disciples, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" Some are saying he is the Baptizer back from the dead. Some say, Elijah. Others say he is another old prophet returned... As if God only works in replays.

Then the pivotal question of life, even for us, comes: "But you, who do you say that I am?"

Who is Jesus? Frankly, that's still the question in our day! Is he just a good example that stirred up people with hope? Is he a moral teacher? Is he a political leader that faced death instead of taking the highest office in the land?

Jews had the expectation that the Messiah would "redeem" Israel. For most that meant that he would throw out the Romans and give territorial integrity back to the people. That he would be a skillful and valiant warrior-king, dashing the enemy and keeping the spoil for the people.

Even after his resurrection, his disciples will be confused about this.

"But you, who do you say that I am?"

Peter answers for the disciples, "God's Messiah."

The One we have been waiting for... the King bringing his kingdom. Is this God himself, the I AM, come to save? How we answer matters.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." C.S. Lewis

God's chosen One, the Messiah. This is who Jesus is.

Jesus strictly warns them to tell no one. I think he knows what would happen - with all the misconceptions of who the Messiah should be and what he should do - crowds would swell for the wrong reasons. And this Messiah is not what they expected.

“It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day.” -- **Luke 9:22** (CSB)

In popular Jewish views of that time, Messiah was expected to overthrow Roman rule and, in a wave of popularity, take over as king of Israel. Contrary to this, Jesus’s mission was to suffer and be rejected by the Jewish leadership before being killed and raised from the dead.

It is necessary... this is his destiny.

They won’t get it just yet, but better than an end to Rome, better than self-determination, a King that dies is what they, what we need.

“And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. 14 He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.” -- **Colossians 2:13-15** (CSB)

“He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” -- **Romans 4:25** (CSB)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” -- **Romans 5:1-2** (CSB)

And because his suffering, his cross, and resurrection deliver this, he can be trusted!

But we don’t just have to take Peter’s word for it.

Jesus’ identity as the “Christ”—confessed by angels (Luke 2:11); by the Gospel narrator (2:26); by demons (4:41); and by Jesus himself (4:18)—is now confessed for the first time by the Twelve.

And then the transfiguration.

Some days later, Jesus took Peter, John, and James up the mountain to pray (remember when Jesus prays something big is about to happen!)

As Jesus was praying, his appearance changed - his clothes became dazzling white. This is his glory seen. And there talking with him were Moses and Elijah. Representing the law and the prophets... all that point to Jesus. Speaking of his exodus from Jerusalem. Going over logistics with the cruciform Christ.

The disciples have their woke moment - when they were fully awake they saw Jesus in his glory. Peter offers to make shelters as if the three were equals... but a cloud appears and overshadows them - the fear of the Lord comes on them.

And a voice comes. "This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him!" -- **Luke 9:35** (CSB)

Jesus remains alone - this cruciform Christ.

Jesus is the last and true Prophet (cf. Acts 3:22). He is the true Israel, the Messiah, and God's own Son. The focus should be on him and him alone. The transfiguration shows that he is God's Son, sharing God's own nature.

He is the One that saves, that frees, that draws all of humanity unto himself. He is the Son sent so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

He is not what we expected, but he is the Chosen One. He is the Messiah that will give himself away to save us, to give us life.

This is what we need to know to shape how we live.

Cruciform Life

He is the King they have been waiting for... and he tells us clearly what allegiance to him looks like. Are you ready for this?

“If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it. 25 For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself?” -- **Luke 9:23-25** (CSB)

Can you imagine hearing this? Like getting this information in a text - “Keep your life by giving it away” I would likely respond, “new phone who ‘dis?!”

What does it mean?

Follow after me means to become a disciple and requires that a disciple: (1) deny himself (not simply denying certain things but denying personal control of one’s life); (2) take up his cross (make a commitment that will lead to rejection and possibly even death); and (3) follow me (following the example and teachings of Jesus).

“Those who wish to follow Jesus in discipleship must deny themselves, which means they must renounce their own plans and purposes for their lives. They are to take up their cross “daily” TS

Daily death. Denying ourself. Setting aside our inclinations, our trust in ourselves - putting others before us. Being shaped like the cross...

This is not the viral message of the day. This is not TED talk material. Not even material for most churches' sermons!

“I came to Christ for the Mercedes and all I got was this cross!”

Jesus has more for our lives in mind, something more meaningful, fuller, richer, and sacrificial.

Don’t sugarcoat this!

“A cross results from specifically walking in Christ’s steps, embracing his life. It comes from bearing disdain because we are following the narrow way of Jesus Christ, “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). It comes from living out the business and sexual ethics of Christ in the marketplace, the community, the family, the world. It comes from standing true in difficult circumstances for the

sake of the gospel...Our crosses come from and are proportionate to our dedication to Christ.” Hughes

When we confess Christ, we embrace his dying on the cross for us. But we also accept the reality of a cross for ourselves.

Giving yourself away because you have been given something better.

Having tasted life, seeing what else is out there and saying; “Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.” -- **John 6:68-69** (CSB)

And this is not trifling stuff of life, hangnails, and stubbed toes. But “whoever loses his life because of me will save it.”

Because they found out you have a different King. When you don't fit expectations; when you are not out for yourself, but you give yourself away.

It is actually good. When you think of what typical “death bed wishes” are, they are rarely things like “I wish I held more grudges...I wish I spent more time in the office...I wish I took advantage of more people...” Following after Jesus, ours is not just a life with something added to it - but a wholly different life in our world.

Because he took on the life of the cross, following him we do too.

Eternal consequence. “For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and the holy angels.” -- **Luke 9:26** (CSB)

“The promise of the gospel is that if we will exchange our values for God's, embracing the life he offers as the most rich and fulfilling, then we will receive glory and security that will last eternally. Jesus appeals to us to embrace the wisdom of God's way, promising that through following his path of death to self we will find eternal life in him.” GTB

This is how we show who we trust, and who we belong to. And it is how we see the Kingdom.

“Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” -- **Luke 9:27** (CSB)

There are many opinions on what Jesus is talking about here. Some say end-times, the fullness of the Kingdom. Others say the disciples will see the transfiguration and that is what he is talking about. Still, others suggest he means the church founded, the cross, the resurrection, Pentecost.

Given the immediate context, however, I am inclined to say seeing the Kingdom is living the cruciform life with one another while we wait for the return of our King. Gives clarity on where our allegiance lies.

This is what the Kingdom looks like. Upside down. Good.

“Discipleship means we testify that our loyalty is to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. We pledge ourselves to follow him, to deny ourselves, and to walk the road to Calvary daily...” A life that is pointing to Jesus.

“All of God’s promises “find their Yes in him” (2 Cor. 1:20). “All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are “hidden” in him (Col. 2:3). We are “filled in him” (Col. 2:10). Christ is our life (Col. 3:4), and “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). The transfiguration communicates the same truth: the Law and the Prophets point to Christ. Jesus is the new and better Moses. He is the true Israel. He is the new and better David. He is God’s very own Son, the true revelation of God. We need, therefore, to listen to him, to meditate on him, to rejoice in him,... to love him.” and to live like him! (TS)

Don’t take my word for it! Take His! “This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him! ”

The Kingdom is experienced as we live like Jesus.

The Cruciform Christ is for you - call him King, trust him, put your hope in him. Rest in his finished work for you. And then live!

The Cruciform Life is for you - “take up your cross daily,” train your ears and heart to listen to Jesus. Determine to give your life away, and when you slip up,

get up and go again. He is for you, he has you. Help each other as you follow after Jesus.

The Kingdom is experienced when we live like Jesus.

He is “God’s Messiah,” rejected, killed, and raised for your salvation, for your life. Call him King, live like him. Unashamed. For his glory and your good.