

November 20, 2016

## *I Want to Know Jesus*

*"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."*

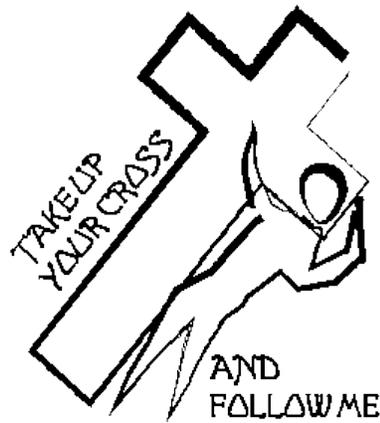
Philippians 3:10-11

*"Who do the crowds say I am?"... "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God."... "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it..."*

Luke 9:18-27

What about you? Who do you say that Jesus is? This is, of course, a question that each of us must answer for ourselves and our answer makes all the difference. Every day we are faced with situations where we must answer this question: Who do I believe Jesus is?

If I believe, like Peter, that Jesus is the *"Christ of God"* then my life will reflect that belief. If I think that Jesus was less than the *"Christ of God"* then my life will reflect that belief as well. Our true beliefs are always demonstrated in the way we live.



So, if I truly believe that Jesus is the *"Christ of God"* then how will my life look? Jesus tells us, *"If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."* For those who choose to believe that Jesus is the *"Christ of God"* this is how life will look. Those of us who truly believe will learn to deny ourselves. Saying "no" to those impulses within us that loudly demand instant gratification is no easy matter.

Within each of us is a self-serving nature that constantly demands gratification. That nature is ultimately designed to guarantee our survival, but it can easily influence us to be selfish and demanding. So, those who believe that Jesus is the *"Christ of God"* will learn to say "no" to the self-serving nature within us.

Beyond that Jesus tells us that we must, *"...take up (our) cross daily and follow (him)."* In the first century crucifixion was a common method of execution. The Romans used this very public form of horrific execution as a means to control the peoples they had conquered and so for those who are hearing Jesus talking about *"...taking up your cross..."* the image is instantly obvious. Those who take up a cross are going to die on that cross. So, Jesus is telling us that we must develop past just saying "no" to that selfish survival-driven nature within us to the point where that part of us is put to death.

Jesus words really challenge us, I think, to understand that our very survival is at issue here. The survival-driven self constantly fights to keep us alive at all costs. If we believe that our survival is threatened will we nearly always fight, and often visiously. The drive to survive is a powerful, and often, self serving force.

Jesus would tell us, I believe, that the only way to ultimately overcome this selfish, survival-driven nature which is the source of sin within us, is for us to surrender our very survival to God. Literally we chose to die if that is what God choses for us. We literally save our lives by choosing to lose them to God and to His control.

Thus, the Apostle Paul is able to 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) And, *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21)

So, who do you believe that Jesus is? If you believe, really believe, that he is the *"Christ of God"* does your life reflect that belief? Does mine? If we really and truly have accepted that Jesus is the *"Christ of God"* then we should be able to say, truthfully, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me..."*

