

## Living in View of the Cross Part 4

I couldn't get away from this thought as I prayed and prepared for the message this morning. I've talked about what the cross and the resurrection mean to us. I've talked about what it means for us to live with the cross in view in our lives, but I just felt I had to share some additional thoughts this morning. In fact, more than sharing and message, I guess I feel I am to issue a challenge – a challenge for all of us to really take to heart what it means for us to live our lives with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ always before us.

I shared something of this last Sunday morning as I mentioned that the call to live in view of the cross and the resurrection is a call to live a crucified life. It means if we are going to truly be followers of Jesus Christ, then we are to take up our cross so we too can die. We are to die to sin, die to the lust of our flesh and our sinful nature, die to a life of only pleasing ourselves and living for our selves. The bible says we are to live our life of faith as though we have been crucified with Christ. Galatians 2:20 states, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." With the life of Christ within us, we no longer live for ourselves but for Christ and his kingdom. We die to ourselves and live for him. It's the way of the cross, the way of the crucified life.

I have heard several Christian leaders in recent days say that the problem with the church today is that we are under-challenged. We have failed our children, our youth, our young adults - we've failed the next generation – by dumbing down the gospel. I preached to you a couple of months ago about the problem with veggie tales-theology. It leaves out the cross. It's good clean fun, clean entertainment, but Veggie Tales can't communicate the gospel.

We've foolishly tried to sanitize the gospel. We've tried to figure out how to take the cross out of Christianity because we thought it was too demanding, too bloody, too offensive. We've tried to preach a gospel that only required a cross for Jesus and none for us and that is not what Jesus said. Let me share it again – Jesus said **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."** **Matthew 16:24.**

**There is no gospel without the cross.** Our sins were dealt with on that cross.

His cross meant a final work, but we are called to a crucified life as well. We are called to a life of commitment and sacrifice, we are called to a life of service and surrender as well. We are called to a cross. I'm not trying to hide the truth from anyone this morning, to make it sound so simple and easy and then we have you read the fine print of the gospel after you join. Up front. First thing. There is a cross involved in the life of the follower of Christ. Deitrich Bonhoeffer, the great German theologian who died at the hands of Germany's Third Reich, said, **"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die... because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts."...Deitrich Bonhoeffer**

We've missed it. What has happened to us? A gospel without a cross? Was such a call just for previous generations? Was it just for the disciples, whom all but one died martyr's deaths? Was it just for the early missionaries who pioneered the foreign fields, many of them buried in the very lands in which they labored? Have we encouraged people to search for the way to a life of ease without making sure we have pointed them to the way of the cross?

As a Pastor I have to stop and ask myself the question "Have I challenged you to a life of extreme devotion to Christ? Have I challenged you to live a crucified and surrendered life for Christ?"

I was looking through some books this past week and found a copy of *Through Gates of Splendor*, the story of Jim Elliot and the four men who were martyred with him in Ecuador in the 1950's. In the summer of 1948, while a student at Wheaton College, Jim Elliot wrote, **"He makes His ministers a flame of fire. Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of 'other things.' Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be a flame. But flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul - short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short Lived, whose zeal for God's house consumed Him. 'Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.'"**

That same year he wrote, **"God, I pray thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus."**

It was Jim Elliot who said, **“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”**

How do you respond to hearing the passion of that man? He had heard the call to a crucified life. He heard the call to surrender everything to the Lord. I remember reading his words when I was a teenager and thinking, “I want to be as devoted, as dedicated, as surrendered to Christ as that man, as Jim Elliot. I want to be willing to give my life for a cause greater than myself.” Elliot had written of preaching on an Indian reservation and giving thanks for the opportunity of presenting the gospel. Then he wrote, **“I only hope that He will let me preach to those who have never heard that name Jesus. What else is worth while in this life? I have heard of nothing better. Lord, send me!”...Jim Elliot**

We’ve under-challenged a generation by telling them to go find themselves instead of pointing them to the cross and telling them to find Jesus. Jesus said, **“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.” Matthew 16:25.** If you want to find yourself, then lose yourself in the boundless love and grace of Christ. You’ll find your life when you lose it in total surrender to Christ.

We’ve under-challenged a generation by telling them to look within themselves to find their true self, to find truth, to find their own destiny. You won’t find your life by looking within yourself, you’ll find your life by looking to the Giver and Maker of life. Looking within your own heart will confuse you. The word of God says the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Don’t look within because the human heart and spirit is too small. Your vision for yourself is too small, too limiting. Look to Jesus! Look to the cross. I’m challenging you, Don’t try to find yourself by looking to yourself, find your life by giving yourself to someone and something infinitely bigger and greater than yourself! Beyond yourself. Give yourself to Christ and to the cause of the kingdom of God.

Find yourself when you come to Jesus, when you come to the cross, when you surrender your heart and life to Christ, when you begin to follow him and obey him and his word. You will never find your life, you will never find yourself in all the world has to offer. You will only find your life in Christ.

The word of God warns us about where to look and what to love if we are going to find our life. **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” 1 John 2:15-17**

Don't look to the world. Don't try to find your life by falling in love with the world. Let's be clear about what the bible is talking about when it refers to the world. I picked up a little book some time ago entitled *Worldliness. Resisting the Seduction of a Fallen World*. In it C. J. Mahaney defines the world we are not to love as “The organized system of human civilization that is actively hostile to God and alienated from God. The world God forbids us to love is the fallen world. Humanity at enmity with God.”

We have a world full of people and ideas and opportunities that are often in total opposition to the word of God and his design and his order. Through media of all kinds, through technology like computers and the internet, through our cell phones and ipods, through a host of other things, we are bombarded by choices. Mahaney wrote, **“...while these things are not inherently evil, so often they're vehicles of a fallen world. They deliver endless opportunities to pursue pleasure without regard to God and his Word, endless opportunities to be seduced by this fallen world, to succumb to the sin of worldliness. Every moment of every day we're making choices – whether we realize it or not – between love for a world that opposes God and love for the risen Christ.” ... C. J. Mahaney**

When we find ourselves loving the things of this world, things and values and pursuits that are in opposition to God and his Word and his will, then we are not just in the world, we are becoming like the world. John Stott says we are to be “neither conformed to the world nor contaminated by it.” When we choose to love this fallen world and it's values, it's rules or lack thereof; when we elevate our wishes, our opinions, our desires, above God's word and his truth, his desire and purpose; when we stop living a crucified life, stop living in view of the cross, then we have allowed our vision to become blinded by worldliness. It's time for a decision. It's time for a change. It's time for surrender.

The word of God shows us exactly where the problem is. It's exactly the place we've told people to look to find themselves. The problem lies within. It's interesting isn't it when we talk about worldliness, we start thinking of all these things physically present in the world but the bible starts within. "Everything in the world..." but then John lists the problem within us... "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does..."

Our cravings, the things we want and desire. There is nothing wrong with wanting things, it's when we want the wrong things or we want even the right things too much. When our desire for things becomes an obsession, when our desire puts things before people, when our desires dominate our life and draw us away from our desire for Christ and the things of God, we won't find our life, we will lose it.

What about the lust of our eyes? I'm thankful for my eyesight, but our eyes can become not only a way to see and observe but they can become a means to covet. It's not just sexual sin. Anything we see can lure us and seduce us into coveting and sin.

What about boasting of what we have and what we do? We are talking about how we define ourselves. What is most important to us? What is the essential thing in our life? The apostle Paul had so much to boast about, so many accomplishments he could mention, yet he writes in God's word, "**May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**" **Galatians 6:14**

Paul knew about living his life in view of the cross, living a crucified life, totally surrendered to Christ, his Word and his will.

John points out that all of this stuff he has mentioned cannot satisfy. You can't find yourself here, you can't find anything lasting here because, "the world and its desires pass away." It's all temporary. It's all just in passing, but "the man who does the will of God lives forever."

There is no future in the things of this world, so there is no point in looking to the world for answers or for hope or for your future. No point in trying to find yourself in the values and lifestyles of the world because it is all passing away. Only when you find your life in Christ and in his will can you find true life - eternal life forever.

I know I've rambled a bit this morning, but I'm concerned about not just this

younger generation but about all of us. We are called to live a crucified life but I'm afraid we have fallen in love with the world and we are rejecting the cry and call of the cross.

Can we say like Paul, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world? Where are our priorities? Where are our affections? John Owen wrote, **“When someone sets his affections upon the cross and the love of Christ, he crucifies the world as a dead and undesirable thing. The baits of sin lose their attraction and disappear. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ and you will find no room for sin.”** ...John Owen

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon said to “dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard.” Live your life in view of the cross and you won't be seduced by the world.

He is calling us to a crucified life. He is calling us to a life lived in view of the cross. He is calling us to a new surrender, a rededication of our lives to the call and cause of Christ. Where do you stand today with Christ? Have you accepted his challenge to a life of surrender? A life of passion for Christ?

Can I tell you one last story about someone who chose to live that crucified life? They chose to live their life in view of the cross, surrendered completely to the call of Christ.

In James Emery White's book *Serious Times*, he tells the story of William Borden. Allow me to read the account he shares. He writes, “I once ran across an old book that has become a prized part of my library. It is a biography simply titled *Borden of Yale '09*. It tells of a man named William Borden who went to Yale University as an undergraduate and afterward became a missionary candidate to China. Heir to the Borden Dairy estate, he was a millionaire by the time he graduated high school. As a gift on the event of his graduation, Borden was sent on a trip around the world. Traveling throughout Asia, the Middle East and Europe, he experienced a growing concern for the hurting and lost of the world. He wrote home to say, ‘I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field.’ After making this decision, he wrote two words in the back of his bible: **‘No Reserves.’**

From there Borden went on to Yale University with purpose and determination.

During his first semester he began a campus-wide student movement to meet regularly, read the bible and pray. By the end of his first year, 150 fellow freshman were meeting for weekly Bible studies. By the time he was a senior, 1,000 out of Yale's 1,300 students were joining together in these groups. Beyond the campus, Borden founded the Yale Hope Mission to reach out to those on the streets of New Haven, Connecticut. All of this was set in the context of his call to foreign missions, which soon focused on Muslims in China. After graduation, Borden was offered numerous high-paying jobs, but he declined them all in order to pursue the mission field. At this point, he wrote down two more words in the back of his bible: '**No Retreats.**'

Borden next went to graduate school at Princeton Seminary, where he was ordained to the ministry. After he finished his studies, he set sail for China through the China Inland Mission, stopping first in Egypt to study Arabic. While there, he contracted cerebrospinal meningitis. In less than a month, William Borden was dead. He was twenty-six years old. But before his death, knowing that the steps of his life would take him no further, he had written two more words in his bible: beneath 'No Reserves' and 'No Retreats' he had written '**No Regrets.**'"

Jesus is calling us to live a life crucified to the world and the world crucified to us. I want to live my life like Jim Elliot, allowing God to light the embers of my life and let me burn for God. To live my life like William Borden, with no reserves, no retreats and no regrets. I want to make my life count for something. I want to live my life in the cause of something greater than just making money or pleasing myself with all the attractions of this world. I want my life to count in the cause of Christ. I want to live my life in view of the cross, with the cries and the call of Calvary in my ear. I want to surrender my life to Christ and make it count for eternity.

Thomas Kelly wrote, "**The times are too tragic, God's sorrow is too great, man's night is too dark, the Cross is too glorious for us to live as we have lived, in anything short of holy obedience.**" ....Thomas Kelly

Are you ready to surrender your whole life to Christ, to live your life in obedience, to live a crucified life, to live your life in view of the cross? 'The cross is too glorious for us to live as we have lived.'

I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me.