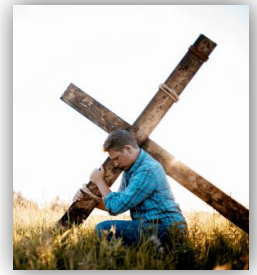


Radical Christianity (Luke 9:21-27)

The word 'radical' comes from the Latin word 'Radix', which means 'roots'. 'Radical Christianity' does not mean being extreme or fanatical, but going back to the roots of our primary calling as the Church.



A. Power of the Cross

The authority of the heaven is vested in the Church Jesus is building on earth. This teaching of Jesus must have amazed the disciples. But Jesus goes on to shock them even more!

1. Jesus the Son of Man must (v22) :-

- (i) suffer many things;
- (ii) be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes;
- (iii) be killed;
- (iv) be raised the third day.

They have waited one thousand years for the Messiah to come, ever since God promised King David "Messiah the Anointed King" who will sit on his throne forever.

The disciples just found out to their shock and excitement that Jesus their teacher is the long awaited Messiah, the anointed King, and the Son of God! And He has been demonstrating unprecedented power of God and multitudes were coming to Him.

Now in the next breath, Jesus tells them that He will suffer, be rejected, and be killed!

2. At this point Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, "*Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!*" (Matt 16:23).

In human zeal, Peter was trying to take away the cross from Jesus, and Jesus wouldn't have any of it. He rebuked Peter in sharpest words we can imagine, "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*" (Matt 16:24)

Without the cross of Jesus Christ there is no salvation, no deliverance, no forgiveness of sins, no victorious church, etc.

The Church is founded upon the cross of Jesus Christ! Jesus' death and resurrection is what gives the Church heaven's authority.

B. Call to the Cross

Then Jesus delivers them even more shocks.

1. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (v23)

Jesus just told them about His shocking future – cross to suffer before glory, which Peter vehemently protested. Glory is fine and to be expected, but the cross?

Now Jesus turns around to tell His disciples that their own destiny will be the same as their master – cross precedes glory.

The fundamental and primary calling of the Church from the very inception was to follow Jesus Christ. And in order to follow Jesus we must :-

- (i) deny ourselves;
- (ii) take up our cross daily and follow Him.

2. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." (v24, or 'find it.' Matt 16:25).

There are three Greek words for 'life'.

- (i) 'bios' – biological life
- (ii) 'psuke' – soulish life, "I will; I think; I want", self-centred life around my 'EGO'
- (iii) 'zoe' – spiritual life / eternal life, life in the Spirit

The 'life' in v24 that we must lose to follow Christ is (ii)'psuke' – soulish life.

Jesus is saying if we hold on to our soulish life, ego centred life, we will end up losing our life. But if we are willing to lose our soulish life, we will end up finding another life - 'zoe' life.

There is a life to 'lose', and there is a life to 'find'. First we must lose our ego centric soulish life. Then we will find spiritual life in Christ. We cannot reverse the order.

And the 'cross' comes between our old life outside Christ and new life in Christ. One definition of the 'cross' is - the place where my will and God's will cross.

There is a booming version of Christianity in the west that is almost completely cross-less. This version of Christianity says: 'Jesus came to make us very comfortable in this world by making us rich, healthy, popular with people with a lot of anointing until we go to heaven.' This is the cross-less version of Christianity, 'bubble Christianity', inflated by the religious mind. It will burst along with the 'bubble economy' in the coming days.

C. Questions to Answer

1. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (v25, c.f. 'soul' Matt 16:26)

If I were to describe the spirit of the world prevalent today, I couldn't have described it more accurately. How would I describe this generation?

'A generation of people in desperate pursuit of gaining the world and in the process have lost their souls.'

What are we pursuing? We are in a prolonged 'lockdown'. Let's not waste this precious time. When the lockdown is lifted, I pray that God's people will not go back to 'normal life'. Instead may we go right back to the root of Christianity and foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ, back to our primary colour and fundamental calling.

I pray we will deeply reflect on and answer these questions during this time of lockdown.

- (i) What am I pursuing in life?
 - (ii) Am I willing to lose soulish life to find another life that is *hidden in Christ*?
2. "Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." (v26, Matt 16:27 adds, "He will reward each according to his works.")

Let us not be ashamed of Jesus Christ and His words. Let us not be the 'hidden secret Christians'. Let us be infectious Christians with boldness and sensitivity.

If someone you know is in deep trouble and needs Jesus, do they know that if they come to you they can learn about Jesus and His gospel?

3. "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God." (v27)

Peter, James and John were about to have glorious experience on Mt Hermon very soon. They would witness the pre-incarnate glory of Christ as a preview of the coming Kingdom at His return. Jesus would transfigure in front of their eyes in blinding light, and Moses and Elijah would appear before them.

What will these ancient prophets of Israel talk to Jesus about?

Exodus! The deliverance of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, which foreshadowed the deliverance Christ would accomplish for the Church out of slavery to sin, world and satan, for Jesus is the Passover Lamb.