

I.N.I.

Second Sunday in Lent
March 12, 2017
Mark 8:34-38

In Christ Jesus, our Savior who endured the shame of the cross for the joy that was set before Him, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Let's see how carefully you were listening to our sermon text, to our Savior's words? Our Lord laid before us at least 6 commands or challenges. Challenges to all of us, His followers. Did you catch them all?

- 1) **DENY YOURSELF!**
- 2) **TAKE UP YOUR CHRISTIAN CROSS**
- 3) **KEEP ON FOLLOWING JESUS**
- 4) **LOSE YOURSELF FOR JESUS!**
- 5) **KEEP COUNTING THE COST OF YOUR SOUL**
- 6) **NEVER BE ASHAMED OF JESUS!**

While the season of Lent focuses on the sufferings of our Savior that earned salvation for us, our text this morning goes a step beyond to describe the suffering which Christians should expect as a result of being the Lord's followers, the Lord's disciples. How can we not be ashamed, or how can we not be put to shame as we follow Christ? The answer: By looking to His **OWN SHAME- FILLED SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS FOR US!** The Father put His own Son to shame so that we need never be ashamed.

Our theme this morning is a question, **ASHAMED OF JESUS?** May each of us be led by the Spirit to examine our lives with this searching question, are we ashamed of Jesus?
First our text shows us:

I: THE SHAME OF THE CROSS!

In the verses just prior to our text Jesus clearly tells His disciples about His upcoming suffering and death. We read vs. 31-32; **AND HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM THAT THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER MANY THINGS, AND BE REJECTED BY THE ELDERS AND CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES, AND BE KILLED, AND AFTER THREE DAYS RISE AGAIN. HE SPOKE THIS WORD OPENLY.** The disciples were clearly told, they were not shielded or protected from the realities, the painful realities of the sacrifice which Jesus would have to make. Jesus had to endure the **SHAME** of being crucified like a common criminal, He had to endure the **SHAME** of being rejected by His own people, His own religious leaders. He had to endure the **SHAME** of ridicule, mockery, and mistreatment by both the unbelieving Jews and the heathen Romans. But worst of all He had to endure the **SHAME** of eternal damnation at the hands of His heavenly Father.

The author to the Hebrews encourages us to fix our eyes and hearts upon this **SHAME** of Jesus. We read in Hebrews 3:1 **THEREFORE, HOLY BRETHREN, PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING, CONSIDER THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION, CHRIST JESUS, WHO WAS FAITHFUL TO HIM WHO APPOINTED HIM...LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.**

Yes, Jesus endured the shame of the cross, of rejection, ridicule, mockery, mistreatment and should we expect anything less? All who call themselves followers of Jesus, disciples of Christ, children of God should expect the **SHAME** of the cross, the **SHAME** of suffering for Jesus' sake. Jesus did not lie to His disciples nor to us and say "follow Me and you'll have a carefree, wonderful life of leisure, pain-free pleasures and peaceful days in a rose garden." No, instead He clearly told us that the world will hate us because of Him. We read John 15:18-21. **IF THE WORLD HATES YOU, YOU KNOW THAT IT HATED ME BEFORE IT HATED YOU. IF YOU WERE OF THE WORLD, THE WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN. YET BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, BUT I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE**

WORLD, THEREFORE THE WORLD HATES YOU. REMEMBER THE WORD THAT I SAID TO YOU, A SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS MASTER. IF THEY PERSECUTED ME, THEY WILL ALSO PERSECUTE YOU. IF THEY KEPT MY WORD, THEY WILL KEEP YOURS ALSO. BUT ALL THESE THINGS THEY WILL DO TO YOU FOR MY NAME'S SAKE, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT KNOW HIM WHO SENT ME. Again Jesus said, **IN THE WORLD YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION.** The Apostle Paul echoes these words when he writes **WE MUST THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Jesus is not here talking about the normal everyday sorrow, grief and pain that everyone endures in this world of sin, that both believer and unbeliever experience. He is talking about the cross-bearing, the selfless denial, the persecution and rejection that we as Christians will have to and will want to endure for His sake and for the sake of the Gospel.

At least 5 times in the Scriptures Jesus commands us to **TAKE UP OUR CROSS!** The disciple of Jesus should be willing to bear the burden which being a Christian implies in a world of sin and unbelief. Whether the phrase **TAKING UP ONE'S CROSS** was a common or uncommon phrase before Jesus used it is uncertain. But our Savior indeed knew the eternal significance of it. However heavy the cross for Christ may be to us, we must remember that **HIS CROSS** has removed the eternal unbearable burden for us. He bore for us what we could not bear, He carried our sins in His body and He endured His Father's eternal wrath and condemnation which we should have had to endure. He endured the **SHAME** of the cross before the Father so that we would not have to. Therefore we, moved by Jesus' great loving sacrifice for us, will be willing to bear **SHAME** for being a Christian. This is not a burden for the believer, but a **JOY!** We are told in Acts 5:41 that the disciples **REJOICED THAT THEY WERE COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME.**

Taking up our cross entails two other requirements: **DENY YOURSELF/FOLLOW ME.**

We cannot willingly bear **SHAME** for Jesus' sake if we are constantly concerned about ourselves. Our health, our looks, our wealth, our future, our security, our retirement, our recreation, our jobs, our schooling, our enjoyment, our goods. If these things selfishly fill our hearts and minds then we will not be able to focus on Jesus. Denying oneself literally means: "to act in a totally selfless manner." It means "not demanding one's rights." It means "denouncing our sinful flesh and all of its desires for me and me only."

And then Jesus says **FOLLOW ME!** Take My life as your example to follow. Follow Me in My words and My actions. Here Jesus uses a present tense form: **KEEP ON FOLLOWING ME.** This is not a one time action, like a one time confirmation vow; it is a daily way of life, not following or listening to the desires of the flesh, of the self, of the world; but of Christ. The believer in Christ, whose heart has been set free from sin, from death, from eternal damnation and the power of Satan, willingly denies self, willingly takes up his Christian cross and willingly keeps on following Jesus.

But do we always? The second point of our text is:

II: THE SHAME OF INDIFFERENCE!

Jesus says in verse 35: **FOR WHOEVER DESIRES TO SAVE HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, BUT WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S WILL SAVE IT.** One who is willing to suffer the loss of his life for Jesus will find that he has lost nothing, but gained everything. Our life will either be saved or lost. If we busy ourselves with the saving of our lives, with all the matters and concerns of this world, we will lose it. But if we lose our life, relinquish through the power of the Holy Spirit our control and our rule over our life and its needs and concerns and place them into our Lord's hands, our life will be saved.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was a German pastor, who in the late years of World War II, was locked up in a German concentration camp for his outspoken Christian beliefs. He was disturbed by what he saw happening in the churches of his day and it is true even today. He called the preaching of his day a preaching of **CHEAP GRACE.** He insisted that the modern church had made God's grace **CHEAP** instead of **FREE.** It was a religion which called for no sacrifice, no service, no allegiance, no commitment. He said, *"One who believes the grace of God in Christ, also makes a personal commitment. A commitment to be God's man or God's woman in all of the varied situations of life."*

Christianity is no mere reciting of a formal creed and then signing on the dotted line. No, it is taking up the cross of Christ and then standing in the firing line, in the front lines of battle. The salvation that we have received from Jesus is free, but the price the Lord puts on Christian living is very high.

Do we understand that? When you, our youth, are out with others do you understand that your Christianity comes at a cost. It cost Christ His life and is free to you, but now it costs you in your Christian living. Deny your sinful lusts and desires to go along with the crowd, to live as the world lives. What a shame when see the results of polls that show that premarital sexual activity among those who call themselves Christians is only a few percentage points below those who have no faith in Jesus. There are Christian youth who believe that Christ is only important in church on Sunday and how I live the rest of the week doesn't matter. There are Christian adults who profess Jesus on Sunday and then live like the world the rest of the time. Are we denying ourselves and following Christ, or denying Christ and following ourselves and the world?

It doesn't have to be this way. For:

III: THE SHAME HAS BEEN REMOVED

Jesus says in verses 36-38, **FOR WHAT WILL IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSES HIS OWN SOUL? OR WHAT WILL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL? FOR WHOEVER IS ASHAMED OF ME AND MY WORDS IN THIS ADULTEROUS AND SINFUL GENERATION, OF HIM THE SON OF MAN ALSO WILL BE ASHAMED WHEN HE COMES IN THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER WITH THE HOLY ANGELS.**

No one can miss Jesus' point. What is the ultimate bad bargain in this world? **THIS WORLD!** Ours is an age of materialism. Our lives are being cluttered with more and more things: cars, flat screen T.V.s, every kind of electronic gadget, clothes, jewelry, toys and a thousand and one other things. What a daily challenge to keep our sense of values straight! What do you consider your highest gain or thing of greatest value? Your education? Your possessions? Your popularity among your friends? Your financial investments? Your family? There is nothing wrong with these things in themselves. But ultimately they **ALL** will prove bad bargains if we have not, **ABOVE ALL**, invested in the highest good; **JESUS CHRIST and HIS WORD.** Our Lord Jesus says, **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU.**

There is no higher good, no greater gain in all the world than to have Jesus Christ in your heart as your Lord and Savior. To be declared **NOT GUILTY, INNOCENT, PERFECT and RIGHTEOUS** in Christ makes one rich for an eternity in heaven. Our daily life, not just on Sunday morning, but daily will be centered in Christ.

When we start to count the cost of the things in this world we need to always remember to **COUNT THE COST** of our soul. The cost? More than all the silver, gold and money in the world---**CHRIST'S SHED BLOOD!** What an awful thing it would be to hear Jesus say on Judgment Day, **I AM ASHAMED OF YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE ASHAMED OF ME IN YOUR LIFE. DEPART FROM ME!** Throughout the Old Testament God's charge of idolatry, or spiritual adultery was laid upon the people of Israel. Is today any different? Being ashamed of Jesus in our daily walk, in our life with others in this world is a form of adultery. We are married to Christ, not to this world, or to our friends or to the things of this world. We need to focus our attention and our affection upon Christ, our Bridegroom and appreciate the great blessings this marriage has given us.

The Apostle Paul writes in Phil. 3:7-8 **BUT WHAT THINGS WERE GAIN TO ME, THESE I HAVE COUNTED LOSS FOR CHRIST. BUT INDEED I ALSO COUNT ALL THINGS LOSS FOR THE EXCELLENCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, FOR WHOM I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND COUNT THEM AS RUBBISH THAT I MAY GAIN CHRIST.** When the Spirit leads us to contemplate the value of the soul and the cost Christ gave for its redemption; to contemplate the inability of each of us to redeem our own soul, then we will be led to a joyful willingness to sacrifice **ALL FOR JESUS' SAKE.** Then we will be dedicated and committed members who know the difference between **FREE GRACE and CHEAP GRACE;** then we will have teachers and pastors who will sacrifice their time and energy for Christ to the

best of their abilities without complaint;

then we will have pews filled with repentant worshipers rejoicing in their forgiveness eager to hear God's Word;

then we will have many willing learners in Sunday School and our Bible Classes;

then we will have many helping hands in our cleaning and servicing of our buildings and grounds;

then we will have our financial needs met and even exceeded;

then we will have members who are not ashamed to tell others about what Jesus has done for them;

then we will see believers in Christ **DENYING THEMSELVES**, denying their sinful, selfish desires and wants, and instead **TAKING UP CHRIST'S CROSS AND FOLLOWING HIM**.

May the Holy Spirit continue to work that miracle in all of our hearts through His Gospel of forgiveness in Christ Jesus so that we may boldly declare with Paul: **I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES**.

Amen.