

## A God Lived Life

### Living the life of a Disciple

October 17, 2021 Pastor Robert Hein

**Introduction:** - Today we are kicking off a 4 part stewardship emphasis called “A God Lived Life.”

But rather than going four weeks in a row, we will focus on this theme one weekend each month over the next 4 months. This month our specific focus is on **Living the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.**

Our theme – “A God lived life” emphasizes that we are not simply going to focus on the money you give to church, or the time you spend here in worship, or the talents you offer in service at Good Shepherd. No, we want to focus on your whole life as a disciple of Jesus Christ – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; in all your relationships, at work, at school, in sports, and at play.

You see, we Christians don’t have a light switch inside us which we turn on and off. “This part of my life is for Jesus, and this part of my life is for me.” Sunday morning is his, the rest of the week is mine. We can’t compartmentalize our lives that way. No, it’s all for Jesus; all of our time, all of our treasures, all of our opportunities, every decision, priority and endeavor. It’s all about him. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do it all to the glory of God!

Jesus emphasized this truth in our devotion today when he said: **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.” Luke 9:23-24**

First of all let us **define** what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A disciple is a follower, a learner, someone who sits at Jesus’ feet to listen and learn from him, someone committed to his cause and dedicated to follow the path he lays out for us. Listening to his voice also leads us to trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Sometimes we refer to Disciples with a Big “D” – those 12 chosen disciples who followed Jesus throughout his earthly ministry, like Peter, James, and John.

But disciple with a little “d” refers to any follower of Jesus, including you and me today.

Jesus said if you want to be his disciple, you must **Deny yourself.** Now just what does this mean?

It means first of all you need to deny your **sinful pride.**

By nature we like to think that we live pretty good lives, and “pretty good” ought to be good enough for God to accept us just the way we are. After all, we haven’t robbed a bank or murdered anyone. And we have done a lot of good things in our lives too. We like to think the good we do outweighs the bad, and so that makes us acceptable in the sight of God.

To deny yourself means to come to the painful, but honest recognition that you are not doing okay with God on your own. You have not met his perfect standards and you have certainly not earned his favor. Instead we have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We have rebelled against him, offended God by our words and actions, and truly deserve nothing more than his anger and punishment. And all our good works and all our best efforts can never make up for the evil we have thought, spoken, and done.

Think of it this way. Do you ever see a TV sitcom in which a stubborn husband refuses to call a repairman to fix a broken appliance? Instead he denies there even is a problem, or insists it is so minor that he can simply fix

it all by himself. But he can't. Try as hard as he may, he can't. So he takes the entire appliance completely apart with all sorts of pieces lying all over the floor, but he doesn't know how to fix it or even how to put it back together again.

Then, finally, he comes to two humbling realizations – Number #1 It's broke, and Number #2 I can't fix it! I need help! I need a repair man to come and fix it for me.

That's the humble realization you and I need to come to concerning our relationship with God.

Number 1 – Our relationship with God is broken because of our failures and our disobedience, and number 2 – We can't fix it! We can't make things right again. We need a Savior. We need Jesus desperately!

Now this process of self-examination may be painful, but it is also absolutely necessary to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. You see, once God's law crushes our sinful pride and drives us to despair, then we can truly appreciate who Jesus is and what he has done for us to wash away our sins and restore us to a right standing with God. We deny ourselves and cling to Jesus in faith, cherishing the gracious blessings he won for us on the cross. We humbly acknowledge, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross of Christ I cling." Jesus now becomes our most priceless Treasure; the answer to our fervent prayers and the solution to our greatest need; the one alone who brings us peace, forgiveness, freedom, and new life.

Now that Jesus lives and rules in our hearts by faith, it means we no longer wish to pursue the desires of our sinful nature. We died to sin. How then can we live in it any longer? When Jesus said, "Deny yourself", he was calling on us to put off our old self and to fight our sinful desires. We are not to give in to our sinful passions. Rather we are to give them up. We are not to indulge our sinful nature. Rather we are to crucify it, kill it, put it to death. Bring our sins to Jesus in humble repentance, tell him we are sorry, give them up, and turn and trust in Jesus for forgiveness.

And this is not just a one and done. This is a daily process, a daily struggle, a daily putting off of our old self and putting on the new. This is the struggle to which we are now called as disciples of Jesus Christ.

2) Jesus went on to say, **Whoever want to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.**"

For some of Jesus' disciples, this did mean martyrdom, actually giving up their lives for Jesus. Tradition has it that all of Jesus' chosen disciples were put to death for their Christian faith, except John, who was exiled to Patmos. Many other Christians back then and throughout the centuries to this day have actually given up their life for the cause of Christ. They figured they would rather die with Jesus than live without him.

For, you and me, "losing our life" may not actually require dying for Jesus, but it does mean living for him.

When Jesus rules in our hearts, he rules supreme, as our king, and our Good Shepherd. He leads and we humble follow. Jesus calls the shots. His will becomes our will. His priorities become our priorities. His Word becomes the moral compass which directs our life.

That means if God's Word forbids something, we reject it too. We want nothing to do with it. Remember what Joseph said when Potiphar's wife wanted to have a sexual affair with him? He said "No!" He responded, "How then can I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Genesis 39?

For disciples of Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter what the media is promoting. It doesn't matter what everyone else is doing. It doesn't matter what my sinful nature would love for me to do. What matters is what Jesus thinks, and what God's Word says. That's my final authority. Jesus is my Lord and master. He rules in my heart.

Now I realize this flies in the face of popular thinking. The mantra of our society today insists, “It’s my body, I will do with it whatever I want. It’s my choice. I’ll make it as I think best. It’s my life. I have the right to do whatever works for me and makes me happy.

But as disciples of Jesus Christ we don’t want think and talk that way any longer. You see, we have surrendered our will to his. We have exchanged our agenda for his. We died to our former way of life and now want to walk as a child of the light. We now wish to fear, love and trust in God above all things. The Apostle Paul put it beautifully when he wrote, “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**

What does it mean to live as a disciple of Jesus. Once again, Jesus explained, “If anyone wants to be my disciple, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and **follow me.**”

Remember a disciple is a learner, someone who sits at the feet of his teacher to listen and learn. And then he is eager to put what he has learned into practice.

So how do we listen to Jesus today? How do we stay closely connected to him?

Today, Jesus speaks to us through his Word and through the sacraments he has instituted for our benefit. To closely follow Jesus then, we need to closely follow his Word. We need to make it a priority to read and study the Bible daily, to worship him in his house regularly, and to receive his blessings in Holy Communion often.

The problem is that we often get distracted and we allow other priorities and other activities to rob us of that precious time we need with Jesus.

We insist, we are just too busy to go to church regularly, too busy to read a daily devotion, too busy to attend Bible study. But think of it this way. There are 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week. That means God gives each one of us 168 hours in every week. Of those 168 hours, can’t we find even one or two to spend with Jesus in his Word? Is it really a lack of time, or is it a lack of priorities? And what priority is more important than listening to and learning from our precious Savior who offers us the one thing needful?

Think of it this way. If you don’t water a plant, it will wither away and eventually die. And it will lack the strength to bear fruit. The same holds true of our relationship with Jesus. If we cut ourselves off from the means of grace we cut ourselves off from the source of spiritual strength Jesus wants us to enjoy, and our faith too will wither, weaken, and eventually die.

Yes there are consequences to a living a life of “casual Christianity”. We simply lack the strength and the motivation God wants to provide us through the power of his Word.

When we are not firmly grounded in the truths of God’s Word, we also become easy targets for false teachers who are eager to lead us astray. The Apostle Paul describes immature Christians as “Infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. “ **Ephesians 4:14**

Christian friends, there are so many false teachings out there today. Every day our faith is assaulted by worldly philosophies and sinful agendas. It’s so easy to be led astray and get caught up in the sinful ways of this world. That’s why we need to keep growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ so we can take our stand against the devil’s schemes.

Consider also the tremendous benefits of ongoing spiritual growth. Paul said the fruit of the Spirit, the result of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts through the power of the Gospel, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. **Galatians 5:22-23**

Those are the Christian character traits we need to make it through life, to maintain God-pleasing relationships, to handle hardships, to overcome temptations, to defeat our sinful nature, and to think and act in ways which are pleasing to God.

Someone once said, when we focus on ourselves, we get all depressed. When we focus on this sinful world, we get discouraged. But when we focus on Jesus, he gives us an attitude adjustment. He lifts us up, and fills our hearts with peace, hope and joy.

Remember Jesus' gracious promise to us? "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." **Matthew 11:28-29**

So my friends, what stands in the way of you enjoying a closer walk with Jesus as his blood bought disciple? Is it your sinful pride? Is it your sinful desires? Are you getting distracted by other things which grab your attention, and take your focus off of Christ and his Word? Here is a Cure for Casual Christianity. Die to self and live for Christ. Deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Jesus as his disciple! Amen.