

- Today, we are going to look at something that Jesus spoke about on numerous occasions. Lordship.
  - If we want to be changed, if we want to grow as disciples of Jesus, we must give Jesus increased lordship of our lives.
  - The word lordship means supreme power or rule. Jesus addressed this question: Who or what should rule your life?
  - Imagine you had a dear friend who was dying of a very rare disease, and you bring this friend to a doctor. "You'll be dead in a week. I can cure you, but I want you to know if I give you the remedy there's just one thing. It'll keep you alive for the rest of your life, but you can never eat chocolate again." Well, you're so excited. You turn to your friend and say, "Isn't this great?" Your friend says, "No chocolate? Forget it!" You say, "Are you crazy?"
  - I want this one thing over here too much to give it up even though the doctor knows better and his diagnosis can be trusted.
- 
- What does it mean to give Jesus increasing levels of lordship?
  - Many understand it as a one-time submission. I realized I needed Jesus so I committed to follow him. I asked forgiveness for my sins – now I am good.
  - Sometimes, lordship is tied to sin control. The less I sin, the more I am giving Jesus lordship.
  - We see it is a loss of control, of giving up any opportunity to have fun. If we are “good Christians” this will just make us feel more guilty.
  - **When we retain lordship of our own life, we are settling for a lesser life.**
  - When we give Jesus lordship of our life, we get the life we were designed by God to live.
- 
- Perhaps you have this all settled – but for the vast majority of us, this is an ongoing issue that lasts a lifetime. It needs re-learning on a regular basis.
  - Jesus talked about this a lot. One of the most famous occurs in an interaction with his disciples – specifically Peter.
  - Matthew recounts the event (we can find it in Matthew 16)
  - Jesus and the disciples are walking along the road, and Jesus asks them a question. “Who do people say I am.”
  - Then he turns the lens to them. “What do you think?”
  - They had a long time with Jesus already, having experienced much.
  - Peter makes this famous statement, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”
  - Jesus commends him. Blessed him. Tells him that he will build his church using Peter. Peter was probably confused and thrilled at the same time.
  - But the story takes an interesting turn.
- Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” 23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*
- It is difficult for me to overstate the significance of this exchange.
  - In this discussion, Jesus defines discipleship in a way that should be normal but in our world is completely upside down.

## I. Lordship is about who sets our priorities.

- Jesus entire conversation with his disciples is about priority.
- Priority is about precedence. What or who comes first? Who or what is most important?
- Your priorities determine everything you do. If someone looked at your calendar for the past month – a log of everything you did. If they looked at your bank and credit card statements for the past year – everything you spent. They would have a pretty good idea on what is most important to you.

### A. Our priorities reflect our orientation.

- Did you ever reflect on why Peter was rebuked Jesus? It doesn't say he questioned him. It doesn't say he had a discussion. It said he rebuked him. The word means to forbid.
- You rebuke someone who is going the wrong direction. They need to change direction. Either in actions or thinking.
- Peter (and honestly, the rest of the disciples) wanted to follow Jesus, do good, help people, learn Scripture truths, but underneath it all was a desire to see Jesus become king. To fulfill their expectations. To do something through which they benefited.
- *"you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*
- Your orientation is wrong. You are facing the wrong direction. The fundamental underlying assumptions of your life are wrong. **Your life is oriented around your desire for what I can do for you. It needs to be oriented around what God is doing in this world.**
- To make sure he was clear, Jesus told them what it meant to orient their priorities to what God was doing.
- *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*
- You hear people use this expression. Something difficult happens and they sigh and say, "That's just my cross to bear."
- Our cross is not dealing with chronic health problems, dealing with disobedient children, experiencing a relationship issue, or having one of the worst jobs on the planet.
- This has nothing to do with our problems in life. When we think of it this way, it is demeaning. It cheapens the cross.
- Christ-followers today see the cross as a symbol of grace and love.
- But in Jesus' day, the cross represented nothing but torturous death. Because the Romans forced convicted criminals to carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion, bearing a cross meant carrying their own execution device.
- Picking up your cross was to die. It was the end of your life. It was about no other options. It was about not coming back. It was about humiliation. It was about pain. It was about death.
- Jesus isn't calling his disciples and us to follow God in the hard times and trust Him through those times. He is calling them and us to die. To die completely to ourselves. To change the entire orientation of our lives to his.
- The people followed Jesus because of what he could do for them. How much of your life reflects that kind of thinking? If Jesus didn't do any of those things for you, would you still be surrendered to him?

### B. Lordship is decided in our daily choices

- Giving Jesus lordship is much more than a one-time decision. We decided to follow Jesus. To confess and accept him into our lives. To let him be in charge. That's great.
- But we choose every day the degree to which we submit to Jesus. Every day you decide if Jesus gets lordship and you decide where he gets it.

- “Take up your cross and follow Me” means being willing to die in order to follow Jesus. It is a call to absolute surrender.
- How you choose to spend your time reflects who has lordship in your life.
- How you use your money shows who or what is most important.
- The relationships you engage in show what matters most to you.
- There are times in my life when I did just this. I made choices that submitted and surrendered to God. I gave him lordship. The problem is that in the day to day of life, I tend to take that lordship back. By orientation begins to shift back towards me, my comfort, my desires.
- I think that for many of us, once Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were obvious, we are inclined to feel (though we do not put it into words) that we are now good enough.
- He has done all we wanted him to do, and from now on we prefer that he would leave us at our current level of submission.
- What would you do with your paycheck if Jesus was lord of your money?
- How would you treat others if Jesus was lord of your relationships?
- Let me be clear. Your priorities are not what you *tell* yourself they are. They are whatever you choose to do.

### **C. Our first priority is not a safe life.**

- *“We have created today the most risk-averse society in history. We are the most seat-belted, bike-helmeted, air-bagged, knee-pad wearing, private-schooled, gluten free, hand sanitized, peanut avoiding, sunscreen-slathering, hyper-insured, massively medicated, password protected, valet-parked, security-systemed, inoculated generation in history – and all it has done is make everyone more afraid of everything.”* (Dr. Scott Dudley, Sr. Pastor of Bellevue Presbyterian Church in Bellevue Washington)
- Do you know what keeps us from all-out submission, total abandonment to God, from picking up our cross and dying to self? Do you know why we don’t?
- Because it is RISKY!
- We might end up living where we did not want. Doing what we did not want to do. Being with people we did not to be with. Not having the good things we crave.
- Jesus never called us to play it safe. God’s will is not an insurance plan.
- I’m not overreaching from this encounter. Look at these others.

*Matthew 10:37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.*

*Luke 9:57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” 59 He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” 60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” 61 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” 62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

*1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price.*

*Romans 14:7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

- A.W. Tozer says that those people who pick up their crosses to follow Jesus: 1) they are facing only one direction; 2) they can never turn back; and 3) they no longer have plans of their own.
- My friends, it is time to stop making excuses.
- If you want to be a disciple of Jesus on your own terms, you might as well stop. It doesn't work. Just go do your own thing.
- Two encouragements:

## **II. Our whole life is a process of giving him increased lordship.**

- It is never a one time decision and that is the end.
- It involves repeated surrender. It means never giving up. It means fighting tenaciously to win back the ground we took back from him yesterday.
- It is surrendering a little more today than we did yesterday.
- Don't get discouraged if you are not where you would like to be.
- The disciples were certainly not there when Jesus made this statement.
- But they submitted increasingly and eventually every one of them (except one) literally died on Jesus behalf.
- He is calling us into a life that increasingly gives him lordship. A little more every day.
- *"God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him."* (Andrew Murray)
- And here's the second encouragement:

## **III. Giving Jesus lordship leads to life.**

- **When we retain lordship of our own life, we are settling for a lesser life.**
- Jesus explained to his disciples why this is the way they were to live.  
*25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.*  
*26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*
- Don't miss this. It's huge. When anyone or anything other than Jesus has lordship in your life, you are settling for a lesser life.
- If you try to be lord of your life, to have control of your life, to manage it based on your priorities, your life will be a waste. A total loss. And all those things you are trying to do for your wife, kids and grandkids will mean absolutely . . . nada!
- BUT
- If we spend our lives giving Jesus more and more lordship of our lives, we will find the satisfaction, joy, meaning, purpose, and those things that our soul ultimately craves.
- "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what he is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on. You knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised.
- But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of -- throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards.
- You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage, but he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself." (C.S. Lewis)

*Matthew 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.*

*Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

- God wants all of you. He is willing to give you all of himself.
- **When we retain lordship of our own life, we are settling for a lesser life.**
- Are you settling?
- Lordship is about submitting the priorities of my life to Jesus. To be willing to do anything up to and including death for him.
- You are not called to be safe. You are called to submit more every day. Then, our lives will matter.
  
- In late 1955, five young missionaries, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian felt called to reach a dangerous and isolated tribe of Indians in the dense rain-forests of the Ecuadorian Jungle. They worked for many months establishing contact and trying to demonstrate their friendly intentions to the Auca Indians, as they were called by the other indigenous people, Auca meaning "Savages."
- Contact was made on Friday, January 6th when they were visited in their jungle camp by a man, a woman and a teenaged girl. The meeting was friendly, but ended abruptly when the Indians made a hasty departure.
- On Sunday afternoon, January 8, 1956, at about 3pm, all five missionaries were speared to death at their camp. What you may not realize however, is that the missionaries who gave their lives that day, were fully armed and had the ability to defend themselves.
- Youderian was a World War II paratrooper who had fought in the Battle of the Bulge, was a part of General Eisenhower's honor guard and a specialist in wilderness survival. All of the men knew that the Auca Indians had never outsiders who were carrying guns. So each man was carrying in full view a side-arm and had rifles as well. They had decided that they would, as a last resort, fire the guns into the air to ward off an attack, but would shoot no one, even to save their own lives.
- Later it was learned that they did just that. These five men chose to die rather than kill the attacking Indians.
- When news of their death reached America, Look Magazine did a feature article on the martyred missionaries and concluded it with the phrase, "What a waste."
- Found in Jim Elliot's diary, however, were these words which he had written a little over 6 years earlier: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."
- Many people regret a great many things. You will never meet anyone took up their cross and followed Jesus who regretted it. You won't either.