



## THE GOSPEL OF JESUS WHAT THE SON OF GOD DID

### *The Great Demand*

*(Luke 9:23-27 and 1 Peter 4:12-16)*

Jesus came into the world because it was God's plan to graciously redeem and restore His creation. Because of our sin and rebellion against Him, we stood fairly under His righteous condemnation. We needed, whether we realized it or not, someone to save us from judgment.

But God had a plan that was greater and better than we could imagine. God put on flesh and lived with us. Jesus did more than show us a better way to live; He personally experienced God's wrath on the cross. Jesus didn't come merely to be the picture of a better life; He came to create a way for us to be restored to our Creator and heavenly Father. That is why Jesus came to the world.

The story of Jesus's ministry is recorded in all four Gospels. Each record describes the events of Jesus and retells His teachings in, during, and about those events. Matthew 16, Mark 8, and Luke 9 all have the exact same order of events at this critical time in Jesus's ministry.

First, Jesus asks the disciples who they believe He is, and Peter confesses that Jesus is the Son of God (The Great Confession). Second, Jesus warns them the Messiah will be betrayed, rejected, killed, and raised three days later (The Great Prediction). Third, Jesus teaches the crowds and His own disciples that anyone who wants to follow Him as Messiah is required to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him (The Great Demand). Fourth, Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John in all of His splendor (The Great Revelation).

This morning we are considering The Great Demand. It comes immediately after Jesus unashamedly warns them that His life and ministry will end in a way that none of them expect and want - rejection, shame, and death. The disciples seem to agree with Jesus's claim to be the Son of God. Still, they can't wrap their heads around why the Jewish Messiah would be rejected by Israel and executed. Jesus reveals to them it is not only His ministry that leads toward the opposition, but anyone who chooses to be associated with Him will experience the same fate.

Jesus begins this teaching with a rather redundant claim. "Those who want to follow me... must follow me." Like we learned from last week's text (John 6), everyone wants bread, but not everybody wants Bread (Jesus). In other words, everyone wants what Jesus provides, but not necessarily on His terms. That is something everyone struggles with. The disciples were excited about a Messiah who would fulfill everything they wanted. What His followers were not prepared for, and what Jesus was preparing them for, was a life intended to accomplish His purposes for His glory and the glory of God.

Luke adds the word *daily* to the phrase "take up your cross." The life of a follower of Jesus is not selectively lived when times are bad, or on our schedule, or under teachings and behaviors with which we naturally agree. True followers of Jesus live with him continually - *daily*.

This text takes on special significance when you listen through the ears of the first disciples and particularly the times in which they lived. Jesus has had moments of extreme popularity. Up until the feeding of the 5000, everything was going well. The crowds were increasing. Jesus's fame was spreading. All of that was about to change. The religious leaders would become increasingly defiant and aggressive in their attitudes and actions against Jesus. The crowds would become increasingly erratic when Jesus wouldn't give them what they wanted on their own terms. The disciples were about to see that there was a severe downside to following Jesus.

Jesus wanted them to know that He was not living according to human plans or purposes. His ministry was not up for debate or reorientation. He came to accomplish the will of His Father, and the world was going to fight Him the entire way. That is why His disciples began leaving Him, and He asked the Twelve if they were going to leave too (John 6:67). No one should be able to claim that Jesus was never upfront about what it would cost them to follow Him. No one can reasonably say that they weren't warned.

Jesus ends this teaching with a strong warning that those ashamed of Him and His words will not receive eternal life at the Judgment.

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## *Discussion*

1. When you came to faith in Jesus Christ, were you told about the requirement of complete self-denial? If you were, how did that affect your decision? If you weren't, what do you think about this expectation?
2. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who is ashamed of Him or His words will not receive an eternal reward at the Judgment. He warns that He will be ashamed of them. Why do you think this is true and why do you think He warns them?
3. Read and discuss 1 Peter 4:12-16. How is Peter different here than when he rebukes Jesus for talking about going to the cross? Why is it so important that we do not consider suffering for the sake of Christ as strange or unusual.
4. How has this particular lesson encouraged, strengthened, confronted, or challenged you?

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## *Our Corporate Prayer*

*God, we thank you for your great love that sent your only son to die in our place for our sins. We admit that we do not always appreciate all that you have done or express thanks to you for the greatest gift the world has ever witnessed. Give us the strength to know what Jesus asks of us and joyfully surrender it to Him. We know the world does not know you or understand their sin. Use us to teach them about your love. Through our witness, open their eyes to see examples of a life surrendered to Jesus. We ask all of this through the power of your spirit and for the glory of your name. Amen.*

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