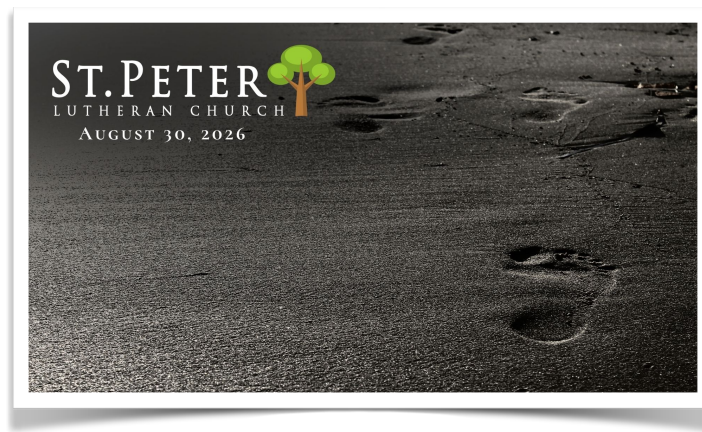




The Way of the Cross

A Five-Day Devotional

August 31 - September 4, 2026

Following Jesus does not always mean choosing the easiest path. In Matthew 16, Peter wanted to protect Jesus from suffering, but Jesus revealed that the cross was not a detour from God's plan—it was at its very heart.

This week, we will consider how easily we can confuse comfort with blessing and avoidance with wisdom. Jesus calls us to a different way: to trust God, surrender our need for control, take up our cross, and follow Him.

The good news is that Jesus never asks us to carry a cross He was unwilling to carry Himself. He went before us, bore our sin, and opened the way to life. Our obedience does not earn His love; it is our response to the love He has already given.

Monday, August 31

When Good Intentions Get in the Way

“But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me.’” — Matthew 16:23, ESV

Peter's reaction to Jesus talking about suffering makes perfect human sense. He loved Jesus and wanted to protect Him. Surely the Messiah should not have to suffer, be rejected, and die. Peter's intentions were loving—but his understanding of God's plan was wrong.

Sometimes our greatest spiritual challenges don't sound evil. They sound reasonable. We want to protect people we love, avoid pain, maintain security, and make life better. Yet our desire for comfort can sometimes cause us to resist the very work God is doing.

Pastor Chris reminded us that the cross was not an unfortunate interruption in Jesus' ministry. It was His mission. Jesus had come to save sinners, and salvation would come through His suffering, death, and resurrection.

That raises an important question when life doesn't unfold as we expect: Am I trusting God's wisdom, or am I simply asking God to bless my plans?

Reflection

Where might your desire to avoid discomfort or protect someone you love be making it difficult to trust God's direction?

Prayer

Lord, give me wisdom to recognize when my good intentions are pulling me away from Your will. Help me trust You even when Your way is difficult. Amen.

Tuesday, September 1

The Temptation of the Shortcut

“You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” — Matthew 4:10, ESV

In the wilderness, Satan offered Jesus a shortcut: authority without suffering and a crown without a cross. It was an appealing alternative. Jesus could have the glory without paying the cost.

Peter's reaction to Jesus' suffering carried a similar message: Surely there has to be an easier way.

We face our own versions of that temptation. We want the blessing without the obedience, the result without the waiting, the reconciliation without the humility, or the victory without the sacrifice. The easier path can look very attractive, especially when we are tired or afraid.

But Jesus teaches us that the right question isn't simply, “What will make my life easier?” It is, “What is faithful?” God's path may not always be the fastest or most comfortable, but it forms us into people who trust Him.

Reflection

What shortcut are you currently tempted to take because it would make life easier, even if it might compromise your faithfulness?

Prayer

Jesus, help me recognize the shortcuts that pull me away from You. Give me courage to choose faithfulness over convenience and obedience over comfort. Amen.

Wednesday, September 2

Take Up Your Cross

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." — Mark 8:34, ESV

Jesus doesn't hide the cost of discipleship. He tells His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. This isn't a command to seek suffering or pretend that pain is good. It is a call to place God's will above our own when the two come into conflict.

Following Jesus will sometimes cost us something. Forgiveness may cost our pride. Generosity may cost our resources. Speaking the truth may cost approval. Serving others may cost time and convenience. Faithfulness may require us to surrender something we would rather keep.

Yet Jesus also says that those who lose their life for His sake will find it. The cross is not ultimately about losing everything; it is about discovering that life with Christ is worth more than anything we might surrender.

We don't carry our crosses to earn God's love. We carry them because Christ has already loved us enough to carry His cross for us.

Reflection

What is one area where Jesus may be calling you to choose costly faithfulness rather than comfortable avoidance?

Prayer

Jesus, teach me to follow You when obedience costs me something. Help me trust that nothing I surrender for You is greater than the life You give. Amen.

Thursday, September 3

What Is Your Soul Worth?

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” — Luke 9:24, ESV

Jesus reminds His disciples that following Him is not a one-time decision. It is a daily choice. Every day we have opportunities to choose between self-protection and surrender, between control and trust, between what the world values and what God values.

The world tells us to protect our image, accumulate what we can, avoid anything uncomfortable, and make sure we come out ahead. Jesus asks a deeper question: What is your soul worth?

Sometimes we can gain exactly what we think we want and still become spiritually empty. We can protect our reputation while losing our integrity. We can accumulate possessions while losing generosity. We can avoid difficult conversations while allowing relationships to remain broken.

Jesus invites us to measure success differently—not by everything we manage to keep, but by who we are becoming as we follow Him.

Reflection

What are you trying hardest to protect or hold onto right now, and could that pursuit be keeping you from deeper trust in Jesus?

Prayer

Father, loosen my grip on the things I try to control. Teach me to value my relationship with You above comfort, possessions, approval, and success. Amen.

Friday, September 4

He Bore the Cross for Us

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.” — Isaiah 53:5, ESV

This week ends where the gospel always leads us: to Jesus. His suffering was not meaningless, and His cross was not simply an example of courage. He willingly suffered for our sin so that we could receive forgiveness, reconciliation, and life.

That changes everything about the crosses we are asked to carry. We don't suffer in order to convince God to love us. Jesus has already settled that question. We follow Him because He first loved us.

Because Christ carried the ultimate cross for us, we can face our own costs of discipleship with confidence. We can forgive without demanding revenge. We can surrender control without believing everything depends on us. We can give generously without living in fear. We can speak truth without making everyone's approval our goal.

The cross reminds us that God's love is not measured by how comfortable our lives are. It is demonstrated by how far Christ was willing to go to save us.

As we close this week, remember: the way of the cross is not the way away from life. It is the way Jesus leads us into true life.

Reflection

Because Jesus willingly bore the cross for you, what is one thing you need to surrender to Him so that you can follow Him more faithfully?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for bearing the cross for me. Give me courage to surrender what holds me back and follow You faithfully, trusting Your love every step of the way. Amen.

Thank you for spending your week with us. Sunday's Coming!