

Crosses Half Price

Many years ago I was waiting for a street car in Toronto. It was a cold winter's day. The wind blew right through me. I turned away from the street and the wind facing the jewelry store in front of the street car stop. A sale was going on in the stores. There were ear rings and necklaces on sale. One sign that caught my eye was a sale sign that said "Crosses Half Price"

At the time it struck me that, that is what I was looking for in my faith, a cheap cross. I wanted what Jesus had to offer, but I did not want to pay the full price for it. We like our crosses prettied up. We shine them and put gems in them, make them of gold so that look attractive to the world.

But the real cross was not pretty. It was wooden and a symbol of horror. A symbol of death. When Jesus died on the Cross he transformed it into a symbol of love and self-sacrifice. Nevertheless it remained a symbol of Death. Jesus Said **"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me"** (Matthew 16:24) In other words he is saying that if you wish to follow me you must die to yourself. Your plans for your future must be replaced with God's plan for you. These may not be very different than what your current plans are, but the goals will be. Or they may be radically different. In either case your goals become service to Jesus as he defines it. Your goal will be to honour him in all you do.

Last week we talked about being transformed by the renewal of your mind. This week Jesus tells us to pick up our Cross and follow him if we want to be his followers. As we listen carefully to the words of scripture we can see that being a Christian and living a life devoted to God is a process that we develop into. There is a growing process involved in being a disciple of Jesus. Listen to John's Gospel Chapter 10:10 **"I have come that they (followers) may have life and have it to the full"**. Again we see that there is growth in the Christian life. Christians grow from having life, to having life in the fullest.

It is a little like falling in love. When we first met our partners we probably had a different view of them than we do now. This is often easier to see if we had known them a long time before we were married. When we first met our partners, we may have admired their beauty, their intelligence, the way they spoke or acted. One lady had a different story. She said when I first met him he was a pain in the butt. But over the years he grew on me. "Over the years he grew on me" That the experience of many marriages. Over the

years we got to know each other better; Our needs, our ambitions, our skills and our weaknesses. As we got to know each other we adjusted our actions and words to please help the other. In do so our love changed and deepened allowed each other to develop and change as a person.

The same is true of our relationship with Jesus. When we first start to consciously follow Jesus we did not know him well. Then as we got to know him better we adjusted our actions and words to please him better. As we learned to better obey him the Holy Spirit living in us changed us, transformed us by the renewing of our mind. In doing so our relationship deepened and we were better able to live the life Jesus gave us. Thus the process of living our life to the fullest continues. As we learn to live the life God gave us we change. The way we see ourselves changes. The way we see others changes. The way we journey into the future changes. As we grow we begin to live the life God gave us to the fullest. We become more like the person God wants us to be. We are transformed by the renewal of our minds. That is what it means to pick up your Cross and follow Jesus.

It begins with Christ's death on the Cross of Calvary. By putting our faith in Jesus Christ and believing that He died on the Cross for us, we die to ourselves. God's goal, becomes our goal. And in giving our lives to his service wherever we find ourselves, we will find life in the fullest. May we all decide to live life to the fullest by picking up our Cross and carrying it. Life is free to receive but it isn't cheap, it cost Jesus his life, It will cost you the same. Thanks be to God, that in giving up our life to Jesus, we receive new life from him to live for him. Amen