

# The Cost of Discipleship

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're working our way through the Gospel of Mark, and last week we saw a passage that was transitional. So Jesus had been very successful in every measure until you get to Mark 6, and then in Mark 6, last week we saw that he was rejected at every level, that his hometown rejected him, his home church, his synagogue rejected him, his family rejected him.

The Greek text says they were scandalized by him. And we're told that he was too ordinary. He was from Nazareth, which was not a cool place in the ancient world, and he was a handyman by trade, and he was the boy that had grown up there that they all knew they couldn't see through the veil of ordinariness in order to see who he really was, and so they rejected him.

Now, Lizzie read for us two stories, and these are also about the same thing. So we see the same idea happening in the two stories that we read. The Apostles' Commission, and then John the Baptist being beheaded by Herod.

And both those stories say the same thing. Jesus Christ was rejected, and when his apostles, his disciples, go out into the world, his messengers, they're going to be rejected too, that they become like him.

He was rejected, so we're rejected. And when he was sent by the Father, and he was rejected, and when we're sent by the Father, we're rejected too. So when you follow the way of Jesus, there's a cost, and the title of this sermon today is Cost of Discipleship, and that's exactly what we read about here in the passage.

[ 1 : 2 9 ] So we're going to see, first, the call to self-denial. That's the first form of the call. Secondly, the call to be rejected, and then finally, the power we need for both.

So let's think about that. First, the call to self-denial. If you look down at the first story in verse 7, Jesus sends the twelve, his apostles, and they begin to go and preach in other villages without Jesus.

This is the first time they're going to separate from Jesus, and this is not the same thing as the Great Commission exactly that we read about in Matthew 28. This is a little different. This is Jesus sending the apostles before his death, and he sends them to Jewish village after Jewish village, not like we see in the book of Acts, city to city across the whole world.

He sends them to Jerusalem and Judea, not to Samaria, to the ends of the earth here, not to everywhere that they could possibly go. They've got authority here to cast out demons at their own command.

We don't have that power. This is different than what we read about in the Great Commission, but the lesson, the principle that's here is the exact same. For anybody that follows Jesus and anybody that is sent out by Jesus, and that's this, that when Jesus sends you out, when you come to him and become his disciple, there is a call to self-denial.

[ 2 : 4 8 ] You see that really clearly here. He says, verse 7 and 8, when you go out, only bring a staff so you can beat wild animals if you have to. That's what that was for. Only wear sandals because the roads are not paved.

They're very stony. Only have one pair of clothing because it's cold. You need at least one tunic, but do not take two. You see in that that he's calling them to a certain type of self-denial.

He says, no bread, no money, not even a bag to put your stuff in. None of that. Why? It's so that when they, every single day prayed, Lord, give me this day my daily bread, they really had to mean it.

They really had to mean it. In other words, they're saying that when you are sent, the principle is that a disciple of Jesus Christ must depend on Jesus absolutely.

That even means denying oneself. The idea here is not that for every single disciple, every single person who follows Jesus, this is not the great commission. This is different.

[ 3 : 52 ] That you're called to not own a bag or to have more than one coat in your closet. You live here. You have to. It was much warmer there. No, that's not what's going on at all.

Instead, there is a call here and the cause to self-denial, and we could put it like this. We could say as the Christian church has talked about for 2,000 years, this here is the call to a life of simplicity.

For some of us, maybe that does mean getting rid of some things, but the bigger principle, the more foundational principle here in the call to simplicity is that you have a focused life, a simple life, a focused life, and that life is focused on and around Jesus Christ exclusively.

That's the real call to simplicity, that your whole life is built actually around Jesus, that when you're called to be a disciple, everything becomes about him and everything becomes for him.

It's a simple life. You're actually not so concerned with that many things because your life is actually about one thing, and that's conforming everything to Jesus Christ.

[ 4 : 56 ] Sometimes people will say something like, are you making time in your life every day for prayer? Is there a space in your schedule in your life every day where you're making time for prayer?

That's a good question, but I think that here, the call to self-denial is a little bit different than that. It's a little bit more precise. We could actually flip the question around and it would become something more like this.

Does dependence on Christ actually determine the course of your life? In other words, it's not, are you making a space in your day to pray, but are you building your entire life around him?

It's not how do you fit him into your schedule, but how is your schedule a product of actually following Jesus in the first place? That's the call. It's the call to self-denial. It's the call to a certain type of simplicity and focus, and that focus is on following Jesus Christ.

That means that practically there's going to be thousands of ways you have to say no in your life to your own personal desires when you come and follow Jesus. You've got to say no today in 2023 to the call that you can become whoever you want to be.

[ 6 : 06 ] There's a call, there's a self-denial on that. You have to actually reject your desires and say that my identity cannot be exclusively developed from what I want it to be. It has to be something given me from the outside, named by Jesus.

You have to say no to accumulating stuff. You have to say no to individualism. You have to say no even to certain TV shows that you really want to watch. It goes everywhere.

It gets into everything. There's a call to deny yourself that it has to cost something. When you look at last week's passage and then this week's passage, Jesus was rejected.

We have to be too. But the first order of business in that rejection is that you have to first reject your own self. The first call to be rejected like Jesus is actually to reject what's going on in your heart, your desires, the things you want, and to give that away to Jesus Christ.

That's the real call of discipleship. Historical note here. What we're seeing here is unprecedented. I looked at a guy who had worked on this theme of rabbis and disciples in the first century and written a PhD thesis on it.

[ 7 : 14 ] He talks about the fact that we don't see anything like what's happening here in this commission ever in the first century or before that or after it. Here's why. If you were a first century Jewish man and you attached yourself to a rabbi, a master, a teacher, when it came time for your commissioning, every disciple went through this, a commissioning.

But what was that about? The commissioning was different than this. The commissioning in a normal rabbi was he was saying, now you are a rabbi. You say, you've discipled enough.

You've been an apprentice long enough. You've mastered everything enough. Now you get to go become a rabbi, and you get to go gather followers around you. When Jesus comes into the scene, he says, you're never a rabbi.

You're never a master. He sends out his disciples, his apprentices, and says, I will forever be your master. You'll go in my name, and you'll proclaim my name.

He's doing something that had never been seen before. That has the simple principle in it that when you go out as Jesus' apprentice, Jesus' master, your time is the master's time.

[ 8 : 21 ] Your name is the master's name. Your purpose is him exclusively. And so all of life gets scheduled around him. He doesn't get put in to places, to the bits and the parts.

Now the second story here, we see the same thing happening. And that's, well, the connection. Lizzie read it for us. You'll see it in verse 14 and 30. Why would we preach a sermon about the Apostles' commission and then John the Baptist beheading?

Well, why did Mark put these two passages side by side? And if you look at verse 14, you can see that King Herod heard of it. What is the it? He's talking about the fact that these 12 apostles are going village to village and proclaiming Jesus and performing miraculous deeds, and Jesus is becoming famous even to the king's ears.

And so Herod heard of it. So there's a connection there. So let's flip over to verse 30 and you can see the apostles returned to Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. So here's what you have.

You have the Apostles' commissioning, the John the Baptist story, and how does the John the Baptist story end? It ends at verse 30 where the Apostles return. And you see there's a sandwich.

[ 9 : 30 ] It's saying the Apostles' story is like a sandwich. It's the bread, verse 30, and the verses before that. And John the Baptist story sits in the middle. So it's putting these together. And here's how one scholar puts it.

He says it like this, James Edwards, the sandwich structure draws mission and martyrdom, discipleship and death into an inseparable relationship.

This is precisely what Jesus is going to teach us in chapter 8, verse 34. If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Whoever would follow Jesus must first reckon with the fate of John the Baptist.

And you see what he's saying? He's saying that if you're sent and you're called to self-denial, you also have to reckon with the fate of John the Baptist.

That sometimes that rejection goes all the way to the point of death, physical death, of martyrdom. And that's why these stories are put together right here. This is not an invitation. This passage, in other words, is not an invitation to cultural Christianity.

[ 10 : 33 ] It's more like what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said to us. It's printed in the bulletin as today's thought for the day, that when Christ calls a man, when Christ calls a person, he calls him to come and to die.

And that's why John the Baptist's story is right here. You see, the first story tells us you've got to die to yourself, but the second story says it might go past that. It might go much further than that.

Discipleship might even lead to death. And the New Testament is saying over and over again, if you really want to live, you've got to know that you must die. And that begins in the heart, but it also extends beyond the heart.

It also goes outward. Now, John the Baptist's story, we'll look at it in a little more detail in the second point, but it tells us that self-denial means that a true messenger of Jesus Christ sometimes has to stand up in a world of greed and decadence and power hunger and proclaim the truth of God's word and God's way.

And that sometimes God's servant gets killed for that. And that's why we read the rest of the Bible and learn and beyond it that Stephen was stoned to death and James was beheaded in Jerusalem and Matthew was killed by the sword in Ethiopia and Mark was dragged to death by horses in the streets of Alexandria and Luke was hung to death in Greece.

[ 11 : 58 ] Peter was crucified upside down. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was murdered by the SS in 1945 in the Flossenbergl concentration camp all because he proclaimed to a power hungry state the way of Jesus.

And that's exactly what we read about here in the story of John the Baptist, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church and sometimes discipleship leads all the way to the point of death in this life. And that's why John Calvin when he was asked a short simple question that we see in one of his sermons, he said, what is the Christian life?

And he says one thing, self-denial. And Martin Luther talked about this a lot as well. He said, what is the Christian life? And he said, it's cruciform.

It takes the form of the cross itself. It's a death. And if you read more about what Luther said about that, he gave us some very uncomfortable quotes.

One of them says this, you must personally experience suffering with Christ. He suffered for your sake and should you not suffer for his.

[ 13 : 01 ] And that's exactly a question that comes right out of the apostle Paul. And we'll move on, but Luke 18, Jesus, remember in Luke 18, it also appears in Mark, Jesus was talking to the rich man.

And he said, the rich man said, you know, I followed all the laws. I've done everything. What must I do to be one of your servants to get to heaven? And Jesus said, okay, give all of your possessions to the poor and then follow me.

Now Jesus was not saying there that every single call upon every single disciple is that if you want to be one of his disciples, you have to give away all your possessions, not at all. Same thing, the apostles commission is not exactly our commission.

But what he was saying is, are you willing to give away all your possessions? If that's what you have to do to follow Jesus Christ? So he says, are you willing to deny yourself to that point?

That's the question Jesus asked. In other words, is Jesus truly your master? Is he truly your Lord and your teacher at the very same time?

[ 14 : 06 ] Now secondly, it's not only the call to self-denial, it's also the call to be rejected. So we've learned so far Christ was rejected, Mark 6, his people are going to be rejected.

First, the rejection of self, it's required. But then secondly, also here, we see that we're going to be rejected by other people, people outside of our own hearts. And that's what's happening in the John the Baptist story.

And this is a story between John the Baptist and Herod and Herodias. And it's a story of public rejection. And we learn here that when human beings reject the master, reject Jesus Christ, reject God, it's really complicated.

That's what we learn. There's a lot of complication in what's going on here. There's a lot going on in a human heart whenever the human heart rejects God and rejects Jesus. And we see it here in two different ways through the way Herodias reacts to John and the way Herod reacts to John.

So here's what's going on. This is classic daytime TV. This is 2 p.m. in the afternoon soap opera level entertainment. And also an incredibly sad story.

[ 15 : 13 ] So here's what happened. Herod is a king. And he's a king, not like his father. So there are four Herods in the New Testament. It gets very confusing.

This is Herod Antipas. And he is the son of Herod the Great, who was the one that we saw at the beginning of Jesus's life, Jesus's birth. He's called here the tetrarch, and that's because he only rules one fourth of Herod, his dad's kingdom.

Tetra in Greek means four. So he has one fourth of the kingdom. And that gets to him. And we learn from Eusebius and other extra biblical historians that Herod was a very luxurious fellow.

He was into nice things. He loved architecture and decadence and beauty. And he built all these nice palaces. And he actually created two new cities in the Judean area just for himself and for the people that he wanted to have around him.

And what happened was that he stole his brother's wife, Herodias. He dismissed the wife of his youth, sent her home, took his brother's wife, and then later he would murder his brother to clean up the mess that was made.

[ 16 : 22 ] And it was very sinister. And there's a lot more detail. We have some of it in a historian called Eusebius. And it was a nasty situation, and Herodias was in on it. The woman that he married that he took his brother's wife.

And she here very clearly in verse 19 hates John the Baptist in particular. And the reason is because, one, I think, Herod and Herodias looked out at the followers of Jesus, John the Baptist, in the middle of their luxurious palace in their decadent parties when we read about here a constant life of luxury.

And John the Baptist was walking around eating locusts. John the Baptist was walking around wearing leather that he had made himself from the wilderness, living in the wilderness, eating locusts.

And boy, did that stand in utter contrast, excuse me, to the decadence that they were living in. And I think they felt the weight of shame. But more specifically, exactly what we're told here is that John the Baptist came to the king.

The church came and confronted the state and said to the state, what you have done, this mess that you've made is not, quote, lawful.

[ 17 : 32 ] That's the word that John the Baptist uses in verse 18, that this is not God's way. That you've, you know, he entered into the political domain and said, sometimes the church, the Christian has to say, this is not okay.

This is not lawful. This is not holy. God doesn't want this. And a good ruler cannot act like this. And in verse 19, it says Herodias hated him for it. And in verse 20, it says that Herod was afraid of him for it, feared him, was puzzled by him.

Now, what we're reading about in that scenario, why, why do they hate him so much? Why do they reject him? Why do they want him to die? And it's because when John the Baptist came to them and told them about the law, told them what they had done was not lawful, they felt deep in their hearts the weight of shame.

And you see, this is about the weight of guilt. And every single human being that's ever been born sometimes feels the weight of guilt and the shame that arises from that guilt come up from the deep, deep recesses of their heart.

You know, they're struck. We are struck as human beings by the law, by the lawfulness of creation order, by the fact that we exist in a world that has laws and those laws are greater and bigger than us.

[ 18 : 53 ] And sometimes that hits us so hard that we react in a couple different ways. For some of us, we awaken and we seek deliverance. But for others, we want to hide the guilt and the shame and push it away and suppress it and try to do anything we can to run away from it.

And sometimes that means cutting people's heads off to get away from the weight of guilt and shame that stands in our life and in our hearts. You see, this story is one that's so complex because it's about the psychology of sin and what goes on deep down in our hearts.

One 20th century theologian named J.H. Boving talks about this a lot. He identifies this thing called the magnetic points of the human heart. And he says in every single culture, every single century, there's these magnetic points, these true Norse that the heart keeps coming back to.

So things like this, everybody, no matter where they're born, what religion they're born a part of, whether they're atheist or theist, no matter what culture, what century, always comes to a point in their lives where they're going to ask a question like this.

Do I matter or am I just a speck of dust in the midst of the cosmos? That's a magnetic point. Is there actual meaning to my life? Meaning is one of those magnetic points. Another one of those magnetic points is norms, moral laws.

[ 20 : 10 ] And that's exactly the one that John the Baptist brings up here. He says to them, you violated a moral law. You've committed a sin against lawfulness. You're not lawful. There's something hanging over you.

And when they reject him, they're acknowledging a magnetic North, that there is a law that hangs over them, that they hate. They know it's real, but at the same time, they hate it.

In the 20th century, we became no different than Herod and Herodias. Because in the 20th century, people started figuring out very clever ways to reject the idea that there is a moral law, that there's a transcendent norm that stands over us.

And so in the early 20th century, there was this thing called the Bu Harathesis. It sounds funny, but this was very prominent in the academy in the 1920s. And the Bu Harathesis said this, that all the moral law is, anytime you feel the weight of guilt in your life, you feel like you're ashamed about something, all that's happening is an expression of your emotional feelings.

And that means that morals and the laws we build around them are nothing but booze and hara's. You know, whenever there's something that you don't like, you say boo, whenever there's something you like, you say hara.

[ 21 : 20 ] And then we create a society of contagion that builds moral constructs around our feelings. And then we came to something like 1945 and 6, the Nuremberg Trials.

And the Nuremberg Trials are very important and a very famous moment in our history, in the history of Europe and the whole world. Because what the Nuremberg Trials did, they held an international court, a world court, a court of justice to try, particularly heinous Nazi criminals after World War II.

But Nuremberg, and the philosophers talk about this, has brought up this real tension, because on the one hand, academics and the culture became convinced, the moral law is nothing but a construct.

You know, what is the moral law? It's nothing but little cultures, little subcultures and regions. Scotland, England, America, but even tighter than that. Even tighter subcultures, taking things they like and then creating moral laws around it.

But then the Nuremberg Trials, what did it say? It said, boy, we feel like there must be some international transcendent law by which we could judge a person for such a beastly crime.

[ 22 : 27 ] You see, if you have an international court, you're admitting to something? That law stands beyond an individual culture, that law stands beyond just a little community, that the moral law is much bigger.

It has to be worldwide. And so there's a real tension, and something like the Nuremberg Trials, we don't know what to do with it as modern people. You see the truth? John came and said to the state, you've committed something sinister as the king, and they were struck.

And that means rejecting God is incredibly complicated. And it happens when God comes to us with the weight of the moral order and says, you're guilty before me, and that does require some shame to rise up in your heart.

And yet immediately we do what? We suppress the truth and unrighteousness. So Paul put this whole psychology really clearly in Romans chapter one. He said, God has spoken through the law, and yet we do everything we can to push it down.

And so here in pushing it down, they say, look, the only way we're going to get rid of this is to kill this man. We've got to kill God and kill his law by beheading this messenger. You see, you reject his messenger is because you're rejecting God himself.

[ 23 : 39 ] You're rejecting the law that God's given and spoken here through the messenger. And so the man who Jesus said was the greatest prophet to ever live, John the Baptist, he got his head cut off because of a ridiculous cocktail wager.

And it's really because we suppress the truth and unrighteousness. We reject God. And that's who we are by nature. Rejecting God is so complicated. That means, let's move on, that the cost of discipleship is really serious.

It's self-denial. It's the willingness to be rejected. And do you see what the John the Baptist story is doing here? It's saying, think about the cost of nondiscipleship.

You know, in the first story, the cost of discipleship is so high, but in the second story, what is the cost of not becoming a disciple? And the cost of not becoming a disciple is to reject the truth and ultimately to be miserable.

You see, Herodias hated him. And she would die in hatred of him. You see, his head rolling down the road would not satisfy her need.

[ 24 : 51 ] And Herod leaves this place and what is he? He's puzzled. He doesn't know what to do. He's afraid. He hates what's had to happen. He knows that God is probably spoken, but in the end, he's not willing to count the cost and deny himself.

And ultimately, he succumbs to his power hunger and his greed and his need to keep having a party. In both instances, you see, the cost of nondiscipleship is misery in this story.

The cost of discipleship is costly, but the cost of nondiscipleship is so much more. On the one hand, you get joy, you get life, you get meaning, you get God himself.

On the other hand, you're wandering without purpose. You're far from God. You see, the cost of discipleship is ultimately to get exactly what John the Baptist says here. He says, you've committed a great injustice and you're guilty.

And that's the cost to stay guilty before God. And that's what failing, that's what rejecting Christ cost us. We'll move on, but let me say this in the Apostles' Commission story.

[ 25 : 53 ] Jesus tells them, when you go to a town, if they reject Jesus, shake the dust off your feet. Very strange. When you leave that town, you shake your feet off and let the dust fly.

And that's a statement, a testimony against them. Now, this is because there was a Jewish saying that I developed the century prior, shake the dust off your feet.

And the way it would be used is that if you were committed to the God of the Bible, the Old Testament, and you passed through Samaria, you came through Samaria, you came out on the other side, back to Jerusalem, they would say, you better shake the dust off your feet before you step from Samaria to Jerusalem.

Why? They'd say, we don't want pagan dirt in our great city. Our dirt is so much better than their dirt. And so don't bring that dirt into our, and mix it with our dirt.

That was the idea. Now, Jesus is reversing it. He's saying, if you go to a Jewish village with God followers and they reject Jesus Christ, you say, they're saying, you shake the dust off your feet, why?

[ 27 : 04 ] Because he's saying, rejecting Christ, that's becoming a pagan. You shake your dust off your feet when you enter Jerusalem to say, I don't want pagan dust in my land, but you shake your dust when you leave a city that's rejected you to say, if you don't count the cost and follow Jesus, you've become a pagan.

And a pagan is nothing but this, a person who doesn't follow the true God. It's non-discipleship. That's the cost. And the moral law says it. It says we stay in our guilt. We stay lost. We don't have anywhere to put our guilt and our shame.

And that's the cost of non-discipleship. We're called to self-denial. We're called to be rejected. And it's because humans always reject God. But then lastly, that means we need power for self-denial.

We need power to face this rejection. For some of us today, we simply need the power to become a disciple, to follow him. And let's close with this.

The power you need is found in this passage when you look at what happens to John the Baptist at the very end. Remember John at the beginning of his ministry, he said, he said, there comes a prophet after me, a teacher, a rabbi who's greater than I.

[ 28 : 15 ] And he's so great that I am not worthy to untie a sandal straps. John the Baptist knew that he always existed to point away from himself, to Jesus Christ.

And you read this story about John's execution. Just think about it. John was executed by a political tyrant who was at the same time attracted to John's message.

And Jesus Christ was about to be executed by a political tyrant pilot who was curiously attracted to Jesus's message.

Herod was puzzled by John. Pilate said, what is truth to Jesus? John was executed because a Roman leader acquiesced to the mob.

And Pilate took Jesus out to the courtyard in the face of the mob and said, do you want him or you want Barabbas? He acquiesced to the mob. John dies in silence, we're told. Not a word, not a word, not a word.

[ 29 : 14 ] And Jesus Christ died, he stood in silence before his accusers. He was like the silent sheep taken to slaughter. John the Baptist is righteous and innocent before an unholy state.



And Jesus Christ, oh boy, he was righteous and innocent before an unholy state. John's followers at the end take his body and bury him.

And Jesus' disciples take down his body and bury him. Herod at the beginning of this hears of what's going on and says, John the Baptist must have been raised from the dead.

And he was close. He was looking for the right thing, you see. You see, the power we need is right here in this passage and it's that John the Baptist has always pointed to Jesus Christ.

And today, John stayed dead but Jesus didn't. And the power that you need to become a disciple, to deny yourself, and to have the ability to go into the world and be rejected and stay committed is only by first seeing him, seeing Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 19 ] God become man for you, the one who came to be rejected so that you could be accepted. See today, you've got to see him. You've got to see that the cost of discipleship is so little when you look at the one that you get, the one who came for you, the God who made you and wanted you, the God who came for you and Jesus.

Jesus is the anti-Herod. You know, Herod is the king who lived for himself, who was decadent and confused, who was puzzled by truth, who ultimately in the end chose power and prestige over the truth.

Jesus Christ is the anti-Herod. He is the king who came and laid down every power. He laid down his wealth. He laid down his right to power. He rejected greed in this life.

And that's the disciples' call. You can only give away your power in this life. You can only give yourself away to Jesus. You can only give yourself away in self-denial when you first see the king who gave away everything for you.

You've got to see him today. Nope, let's close. We're out of time. Christian friends, there's a call here today to self-denial, simplicity, willingness to be rejected, willingness to stand up in the midst of decadence, greed, and power, and speak the way, the truth, and the life.

[ 31 : 40 ] Willingness even to die. How are you doing with that? How are you doing with that so far in your Christian life? Look, if you're like me, the last thing you need to hear is this today.

In chapter one, the apostles impeded Jesus' mission. And in chapter four, they exasperated him. And in chapter three, they opposed him to his face.

And in chapter eight, verse 14, they told him he wasn't going to die and they wouldn't let it happen. And ultimately, they rejected him. They committed treason against him.

And this was all after he had sent them out as disciples to be rejected. And that means that the power to be a good disciple depends not on your gifting and your perfections, not at all, but on the power and the perfections of the one that sent you.

This was a ragtag group, and they were not good at it. And we're not either. And that's why you need to see Jesus Christ today. You need his power.

[ 32 : 48 ] You need the Spirit to come and give you a gift. You see, power is first a gift, and then you have to do something. And this is truly the last word, the something you can do and have to do today.

And it's this Luke nine, you know, Mark eight, Jesus is going to say to them to summarize this whole thing, take up your cross, follow me, deny yourself, die with me and for me and follow me.

Luke chapter nine says the same thing, but it adds one little word. And here it is, the last word of the day. Luke chapter nine, Jesus says, take up your cross and follow me daily.

It adds that one qualifier. And that means that what we're talking about here is a way of life, a way of life. In other words, to become like Jesus, you have to follow him.

And to follow him, you have to self deny every single day. That's the invitation today. Tomorrow, today, Tuesday, every day is a day where you say, I have to deny myself, take up my cross and follow him today.

[ 33 : 49 ] And if you say, look, I'm struggling in my discipleship and following him and I don't feel like this. I don't want this in my life. Let me ask you, if you're not waking up every day and having time to deny yourself, commit your life to him, take up your cross, then it's going to be really hard for the next 23 hours to actually live like that.

And that's why Luke adds the word daily, a daily reckoning with who we are and with the call to self denial. Edward Schweitzer, he says this, everything, even the poverty and simplicity of the messenger, indeed even the courage to be rejected, must conform to the word God has spoken in Jesus.

That God is infinitely more important than everything else. And that's the invitation that every day we wake up and say, today, God is infinitely more important to me than everything else.

That's the cost of discipleship. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would help us to become great disciples and we know that we only do that by first looking at Christ and seeing the power that he displayed and gave to us.

And then we ask, Lord, that you would lift up our hearts this morning, that we would go from this place with a daily call, reckoning to deny ourselves and to even see that our call is so far that sometimes for some people in this world, it even comes to the point of death.

[ 35 : 18 ] We give you thanks that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. We ask in amazement of that, that you would gift us that same type of faith and strength, even in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, in our ministries.

And so we ask for a gift that we cannot give to ourselves today. And we pray for the presence of the Spirit in our lives for this in Christ's name. Amen.