

**Lent Reflection: Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February - Luke 9:22-25** [Deuteronomy 30:15-end, Psalm 1]

Luke 9:22-26

*<sup>22</sup> And he said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.'*

*<sup>23</sup> Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. <sup>25</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?*

As we begin this season of Lent, we are reminded that Jesus knew long before he was arrested that he was going to die. What's more than this he knew he was going to be crucified on a Roman cross, one of the most painful deaths imaginable.

He tried to share this with his disciples on several occasions, but they found it really hard to understand. Can you imagine the scene? The disciples had been sent out and healed many, they'd just seen the miraculous feeding of the 5000 and Peter, had been given the revelation that Jesus was the Son of God. That light bulb moment. He got it – he realised who Jesus really was. What an exciting time it is when we meet Jesus for the first time and know him in our hearts. What a joyous moment.

And then, such confusion as the disciples hear that their God, their Messiah, the one who had come to save them, was going to be crucified like a criminal. And before they had a moment to take this in, Jesus asked them to take up their own cross.

As for us, we know the story well, we know Jesus is going to die and we know the truth that Jesus will be raised from the dead on that glorious Easter morn. We know his death is not the end.

But what does it mean to take up our cross? You see, the call to take up our cross remains for us today; it echoes down the ages. We too are called to take up our cross.

For Jesus, taking up his cross powerfully demonstrated his willingness to come under the authority of Rome in order to do the will of his Father, 'Not my will but yours be done' he called to His Father. For him it was a call to physical death.

As disciples we too are called to die, to some this may mean physical death, yes some are called to martyrdom, but for all, this is a call to the death of our pride, our selfish nature. It's a call to come under the authority of Christ. To come under his authority and to put to death our own plans and desires. To do the will of Jesus, whatever that will may be. Luke 14:27 reads 'whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.' We are called to more than just having Jesus tacked on to our lives as a holy extra, something we bring out in times of need or once a week to make us feel better, whilst carrying on our own lives, pursuing our own goals and desires.

Jesus doesn't just call us to believe in him, believe that he existed or even that he can save us, but he calls us to commit our whole lives to him.

And my friends, this is not a one-off event. Jesus calls us to take up our cross DAILY. In our Deuteronomy reading for today, Deut 30:15 it says 'see I set before you TODAY, life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you TODAY to love the Lord your God. Our Psalm for today, Psalm 1 encourages us 'Blessed is the one, who does not walk in step with the wicked...but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night. Today and every day.

Jesus says in Luke 9: 25 For what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

As we take up our cross daily and walk in obedience to Him, He will bring blessing as assured in our Deuteronomy reading

And as Psalm 1 says 'the one...whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night - 'That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

And as it says in Luke 9:24 Whoever loses his life for me will save it.

The challenge for us is to DAILY put to death our own plans and commit ourselves to His will. That doesn't mean giving up who we are, or not having any thoughts or ideas, but let us commit ourselves this Lent, commit each day in Lent to lay down our plans before Jesus and listen to His will.

May we pray.

Father we thank you for Jesus,  
we thank you that he lived in obedience to your will  
we thank you that he showed us true humility and  
that by humbling himself even unto death,  
he has made a way for us to know you and to live.  
Help us to take up our cross daily,  
to lay down our own agendas and submit humbly to your will.  
Help us to know you more in our lives this Lent.  
In the name of Jesus,  
Amen