

The Cross of Christ, the Cross of Discipleship

Matthew 16:21-28

Main Point :

Jesus saves His people from their sins not only by dying *for* them, but by calling them to die *with* Him.

I. Introduction – Where Is True Life Found?

A. Reading & Prayer

B. A personal, framing question:

“Where is life really found—self-fulfillment or self-denial?”

Let the question hang in tension; use it to create existential and cultural dissonance.

C. Brief Context:

- Recap of Matthew 16:13–20: Peter’s confession, Jesus’ identity, and the promise to build His church.
 - Everything seems triumphant—until Jesus explains what kind of Messiah He will be.
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II. The Suffering Messiah (Matthew 16:21–23)

Jesus saves us not by escaping death, but by walking straight into it.

A. The Messiah Who Must Suffer (Matthew 16:21)

- The divine necessity of the cross: it's not a detour; it's the mission.
- This is how He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

B. Peter's Rebuke and the Temptation to Avoid the Cross (Matthew 16:22)

- Peter loves Jesus—but he hates the cross.
- His rebuke echoes the same temptation Jesus faced in the wilderness (**Matthew 4:1–11**).

C. Satanic Thinking vs. the Mind of Christ (Matthew 16:23)

- Jesus names Peter's thinking "Satanic" because it prefers comfort and human wisdom over God's way.
- The scandal: we resist the cross not because we're evil, but because we want life without death

Transition: And now Jesus turns from Peter to us.

III. The Suffering Church (Matthew 16:24–27)

Jesus doesn't just die *for* us—He calls us to die *with* Him.

A. Cruciform Ecclesiology: The Church in Union with Her Crucified King

- **Note the chiastic structure:**
 - o **Christology (Matthew 16:13–16)**
 - o **Ecclesiology (Matthew 16:17–19)**
 - o **Christology (Matthew 16:21–23)**
 - o **Ecclesiology (Matthew 16:24–27)**

- The church doesn't just confess Christ—it must conform to Him.

B. The Logic of the Call: Three “for” Clauses (**Matthew 16:25–27**)

1. You lose your life to save it (Matthew 16:25).
2. You can't profit by gaining the world and losing your soul (Matthew 16:26).
3. The Son of Man is coming to judge every life according to its practice (Matthew 16:27).

Jesus isn't calling you to something arbitrary—He's calling you to life over death, eternal gain over temporary comfort, reward over regret.

C. The Content of the Call (**Matthew 16:24**)

- Deny yourself – reject your self-rule.
- Take up your cross – embrace costly allegiance.
- Follow me – walk the same path of suffering that leads to glory.

The life of the disciple doesn't run parallel to Jesus'—it *shares His shape*.

IV. But Is This Gospel?

Is this good news—or just good advice for strong people?

A. Question 1: How is this not works-based righteousness?

- It all hinges on Matthew 16:27—Jesus will repay each according to his way of life.
- But what is that way of life?

→ It is not self-justifying performance—it is the life of repentance and trust, made visible in cross-bearing allegiance to Jesus.

- Connection to Matthew 1:21:

→ He saves us not just from sin's penalty, but from its power.

→ His cross accomplishes our salvation; His call forms our salvation.

B. Question 2: How is this *good*?

- Because it's the only path where Jesus walks *with* us.

- **Philippians 3:10** – We share His sufferings and experience the power of His resurrection.

- **Matthew 16:28-17:5:**

- o The Transfiguration shows us where this road leads—to glory.

- o God says, “*This is my beloved Son... listen to Him*” (Matthew 17:5).

V. Conclusion – So How Do We Live This Life?

A. What Does Self-Denial Look Like Practically?

- In a success-driven city like Houston, this might mean:

- o Quietly absorbing criticism at work.

- o Giving generously when others store up.

- o Standing with Jesus when friends mock Him.

- o Staying faithful in a marriage that feels one-sided.

B. Where Do We Find the Strength to Do This?

- At the cross.
 - In union with the One who walked the road first—and now walks it with us.
 - We don't carry our cross to earn salvation—we carry it because we've already been raised with Christ.
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Closing Exhortation

Jesus saves His people from their sins not only by dying for them, but by calling them to die with Him.

His cross is our salvation—and our pattern.

And when we die with Him, we rise with Him.