

We aim to reconcile people unto God through Christ

SERMON TITLE:	OUR LIFE . . . OR HIS LIFE?
PREACHER:	PETER STARK
DATE:	04.04.2010

On Thursday evening, we met for Tenebrae, to reflect on the 'shadows' of Christ as the suffocating darkness quickly closed in, beginning at the Garden of Gethsemane. On Friday evening we met to reflect on the suffering of our Lord as this culminated in the crucifixion, so dramatically portrayed in the Performing Arts Group drama. Today, we celebrate the Lord's resurrection!! And the promise of our resurrection!!

As we turn again to the Word of God, I'd like to pick up with the passage that we considered on Good Friday. Remember the question that was posed to all: "What is your cross?" found in verse 24 "If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow me continually. "

Question: What does this mean? How do we do this? What is involved in picking up our cross and following the Lord Jesus Christ?

I believe the answer to these questions is found in the broader context of this passage

Read: Matthew 16:25&26 "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit will a person have if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what can a person give in exchange for his life? "

After elaborating on his identity (and together with his identity was his mission, his life's purpose,) he describes in verse 21 that he must suffer – "From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he would have to go to Jerusalem and suffer a great deal because of the elders, the high priests, and the scribes. Then he would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised."

Where did he find out that he must suffer? Where did he find out who he was?
Where did he find out what his life's purpose was?

Application point 1: The answer lies in his relationship with his Heavenly Father. "I have much to say about you and to condemn you for. But the one who sent me is truthful, *and what I have heard from him I declare to the world.*" (John 8:26) "They didn't realize that he was talking to them about the Father. So Jesus told them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, *and that I do nothing on my own authority. Instead, I speak only what the Father has taught me.* (John 8:28)

This is exactly what he said about Peter's revelation about his Messianism – "Then Jesus said to him, "How blessed are you, Simon, son of John! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven has." (Mat 16:17)

The Lord rejoiced that Peter had experienced something of what it means to have "heard" and "seen" what the Father had revealed. This had nothing to do with Peter's spirituality or any special quality or ability in Peter. It had to do with the Father's purpose and His revelation – the Father's willingness to make His purposes known – ***it had to do with the coming of the Father's kingdom!***

Application point 2: To “deny” ourselves means to “humble” ourselves and to entrust ourselves to be used of God, for His purposes and for His glory, not our own. “At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from wise and intelligent people and have revealed them to infants. (Mat 11:25)

Paul said to the Corinthians: “My message and my preaching were not accompanied by clever words of wisdom, but by a display of the Spirit's power, so that your faith would not be based on human wisdom but on God's power. (1Co 2:4&5)

At the same time, with the best motive in the world, Peter (and so too all of us!) can be used of Satan - But Jesus turned around and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me, *for you are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts!*”(Mat 16:23). However well meaning Peter was in his instinctive desire to loyally protect his Messiah, he was subverting the coming of the Kingdom of God!

Application point 3: Here is found the kernel of the Kingdom of God and the promise of resurrection life – we have to resist the instinctive urge to preserve life the way we “see” or “think” best and submit this to the process of “hearing”, “listening”, “seeking” and “seeing” what God is “doing” and “saying”.

God’s Kingdom has a King! – the Majesty on High!! – He reigns!! – He rules!! - and his Kingdom is advancing, growing, it is coming!!

Whenever we do something, ... anything, however noble our motive and it does not stem from a deep searching for the King’s rule coming, the Father’s will being done, then we are a tool in the counter kingdom to God, Satan’s tool. We will lose our lives. But whenever we do the will of God, seek first His Kingdom, ask for His will to be done, then we too will be rocks in the King’s hand, where He is building. “But first be concerned about God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well.” (Mat 6:33)

And the Lord Jesus had the same authority as the Father “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth will have been prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.” (Mat 16:19)

Denying ourselves, taking up our place in the Kingdom of God, leads to resurrection life!!