

DENY MYSELF?

Scripture: Luke 9:22-25

Thursday, February 15, 2018, 2nd Day of Lent

You want me to do what? Deny myself? Take up a cross? Are you serious? I have stuff that I need to buy and stuff I need to do. How am I supposed to do all that and deny myself? And then you want me to lose myself? I've spent a lot of time trying to "find" myself.

Our culture extols status, pleasure, self-satisfaction and material possessions. We are urged to buy trendy self-help books which allegedly help us "find" ourselves. In Luke 9:22-25, however, Jesus tells us that we do not truly find life until we stop living for ourselves and start living for Jesus. In Luke 9:25 (NIV) Jesus asks, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" Living for Jesus involves much more than simply proclaiming our Christianity or attending church. We must open our lives and allow Jesus to fill our needs. When we rely on Jesus to meet our needs the "stuff" we cherished loses importance.

Living a Christian life is demanding and challenging. As weak humans, we tend to want our faith to be easy. The German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this cheap grace, "Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross and grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." Bonhoeffer himself knew the true cost of what it means to follow Christ, as he was imprisoned and later executed for his opposition to Hitler's regime.

During this Lenten season, let's all accept the challenge to examine our lives and find areas where we can deny ourselves to better serve our Lord. What can we do? Take on a task at church we have avoided because it looks too demanding or is outside of our comfort zone? Increase our financial giving to the church? Participate in a mission trip? Let go of our fear of talking about our faith to those who do not believe? Each of us through prayer and personal discernment can identify areas of our lives where we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus so that we can truly live. Amen!

Prayer: Lord, show us where we can serve that will increase Your Kingdom. Amen.

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