

**Sermon Series: “The Darkness and the Dawn”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield—3/19/2003**

**Title: “The Man Who Took Up His Cross”**

**Text: Mark 15: 20, 21**

**Intro:** *Ills.: “Willing to take a bullet for someone.”*

**Theme:** Knowing what it means that Jesus was willing to take your place on the cross leads you and me to consider taking up our individual cross to follow Him.

***Jesus gladly bore His cross for us***

- Jesus bore his cross with joy because he wanted to make it possible for us to share eternity with him
  1. The joy set before him enabled him to undertake such a horrific and painful action
    1. *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12: 2*
  2. Bearing up silently under the ignominious death because he had purpose and hope
    1. *“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away . . . For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.” Isaiah 53: 6-8*
- Being participants in Jesus’ death, we can no longer only be “innocent bystanders”
  3. In our baptism our coming to faith and forgiveness has plunged us headlong into his death and resurrection
    1. *“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Rom. 6: 3-4*
  4. We are called with the purpose and hope of bearing the cross of Christ
    1. *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” Mark 8:34-35*

***In our associations with Jesus called to bear an undesirable cross (Print and read Mark 15: 20,21)***

- Simon had to be compelled to bear Jesus’ cross
  1. Probably was not a disciple of Jesus before this time
  2. North African Cyreanean under Roman rule — appalled by violent crucifixion and detested demeaning conscription
  3. As a Jew, touching the cross would have meant ritual impurity and disqualification for Passover for which he came
- Bearing crosses because of Jesus are not those of our own choosing
  4. *“But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” 1 Peter 2: 20-21*
  5. We bear it in our marriages, our family relationships, our jobs, in our community as we minister, among other Christians.
  6. Often we feel repulsed by being asked to bear Jesus’ cross in our lives as if it is below our dignity
  7. **Ills.: Quote from Thomas a Kempis in “Imitations of Christ”**

***Bearing the cross placed upon us can have a lasting impact***

- By bearing his cross willingly Christ changed the eternal salvation picture for all us of drastically and forever
  1. *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” Hebrews 5:8-9*
- By bearing the cross of Christ, Simon’s life was changed forever
  2. The fact that Mark in later years records Simon’s, Alexander’s, and Rufus’ names indicates known by early church and most likely came to faith
  3. Simon never probably dreamed that the Passover trip to Jerusalem would change his life forever

- By bearing the cross of Christ, we find our life's path of history will be changed forever
- 4. *"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."* Hebrews 12: 11
- 5. **Ills.: "In the line of fire" (Clint Eastwood movie—the story of the secret service)**
- 6. Out of devotion and duty for Him who bore our cross of suffering, we endure the crosses of follower-ship to Jesus

**Quote from Thomas a Kempis in "Imitations of Christ"**

"Jesus has many lovers of his kingdom, but few bearers of his cross. All are disposed to rejoice with him, but few to suffer for his sake. Many follow him to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of his bitter cup."

**Mark 15:20, 21**

<sup>20</sup>And when they had mocked Jesus, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. <sup>21</sup>A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.