

Rev. Thomas Emery
“Cross Examined” Mark 8:31-38
Salem Presbyterian Church
Sunday, March 1, 2015

In our passage for today, we see a decisive moment in the life and ministry of Jesus. From this point on, Jesus' attention changes. Jesus' mind and heart and mission are now pointed to Jerusalem and the cross that awaits him. He has one focus - the cross. But Jesus and Peter find themselves at cross purposes, and their goals clash.

TEACHING POINTS

Teaching Point One: *Follow me!* The disciples, and especially Peter, didn't understand what Jesus was talking about when He spoke of the necessity of dying on the Cross.

Teaching Point Two: *Take up your cross.* The cross is a symbol for the world to see. It is a symbol of sacrifice that gives each and every one of us hope and faith and courage.

Teaching Point Three: *Deny your selfish ways.* It means taking on a willingness to sacrifice for our faith. We are now in Lent, and one of the traditions of Lent is to give up something as a spiritual discipline.

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:34 NLT).

ACTION POINT

No concept has been as corrupted in the common language as this one: “bearing a cross.” People say, "I have arthritis as my cross to bear." "I have a lazy husband, but that's just my cross to bear." You and I know such problems have nothing to do with Jesus' words. When you bear Jesus' cross, you are saying something entirely different.

You are saying that you are willing to serve God, you are willing to serve others, and you are willing to put aside selfish concerns and focus your attention on God's Kingdom. If that costs you money, if you have to give up some of your precious time, or if you have to get out of your comfort zone, then that is just what you will have to do. When you bear a cross, God's will comes first in your life. Ask yourself, “Is that where I am today? Does that accurately describe my life?”

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