

Loss Is Gain

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From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (Matthew 16:21-28).

1. Chuck Conway's Testimony

I want to thank Chuck for sharing this morning about his experience in the loss of his wife. No one ever wants to lose a loved one, work, health, safety, and freedom are all important things for us that we don't want to lose.

Our faith often calls us to be willing to respond differently when we lose something. Have you noticed that Jesus expects us to give up things if we want to be his followers? Why is this? I'd like to take some time this morning to go into this part of faith a little deeper.

2. Death of Jesus was Predicted

Matthew 16:21-28 tells us what happened to the disciples when they heard about the suffering and the death of Jesus for the first time. What happened to the disciples before they learned about the impending suffering and death of the Messiah? In Matthew 16:13, we learn that when the disciples were at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked, "**Who do you say the son of man is?**" Peter says, "**you are the Christ, the son of the living God.**" Jesus answered him, "**Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my**

Father in heaven. When Peter identifies Jesus, Jesus seems to be glad that Peter knew who Jesus was.

Yet after Peter's declaration about the identity of Jesus, Jesus tells the disciples that his death is near. The disciples were told that they were about to lose their teacher, the Son of God, and the Messiah. The disciples probably were shocked.

How did the disciples respond? This was not what they had imagined. Suffering and death of the Messiah was contrary to the hope and expectation of the Jews. Jesus included a word of hope, on the third day he would be raised. Yet still, the disciples would have been devastated at the news.

Peter takes Jesus aside and says, "**God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.**" Peter didn't understand that Jesus could be the Messiah and die at the hands of the religious leaders. Peter wanted to keep Jesus alive.

Jesus says to Peter, "**Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.**" Dying was the reason Jesus came into the world. Peter didn't see Jesus' life from God's perspective, but from a human perspective.

3. Discipleship Involved a Cost

Jesus told the disciples that not only would Jesus suffer, but the disciples would also if they wanted to follow Jesus. Jesus said, "**If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**"²⁵ **For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it**" (verse 24 & 25).

What does Jesus mean by this? Jesus wanted to teach the disciples what it meant to be a disciple of Christ. The disciples wanted to be part of a ruling team. But Jesus taught them that they had to give up these ambitions to follow Him. The disciples would not only witness Jesus' suffering but also be part of it. History tells us that many of the disciples died because they were followers of Jesus.

Taking up a cross is often a metaphor that we use to describe our faith. Not many people we know will die for following Jesus. But our understanding of being followers of Jesus should be clear. We don't follow Jesus not to get more favor from the Lord but to be part of Jesus' ministry including suffering and death.

Paul says in Galatians 2:19-20, "**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.**"

Paul tells us that he was dead to his own interests and that his life would be like the life of Jesus. Paul's purpose for life was clear. As Jesus says to his disciples, "***Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends,***" Paul was willing to lay down his life for the Gentiles.

4. Anniversaries

This year, June 25 marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. 1.8 million US troops arrived in Korea to battle against the North Korean forces. 36,500 soldiers would die in this war.

The Korean people pay our respects to those who served and lost their lives. In Washington DC, the Korean War Memorial Park has an engraved stone which reads, "Freedom is not free." Without the sacrifice of many American soldiers, there would be no free South Korea today.

This year, our church celebrates the 110th year anniversary of our stone church. Many people throughout the years have served to build the church, maintain the building, repair things that need fixing, teach Sunday school, sing in choir, reach out to others, and go on missions.

Without their sacrifice and labor of love, we would not have the wonderful church and community we have today. We will celebrate this wonderful history with a video and booklet.

If you have stories or memories you can share with others, please make sure you include them in this celebration. Share your joys and vision for the future for our church as well.

There is a saying, "no cross, no crown." The saying means that there is no fruit without sacrifice. For many of us, our future generations have benefitted and will benefit from the sacrifices we make. May we remember the legacy that we leave for those behind us.

5. Conclusion

We were all able to become followers of Jesus because of the martyrdom of Jesus' disciples and the efforts of many other followers of Christ. These disciples may have lost their lives, but their loss brought more gain than we could ever have expected. This gain is the new life that many of us now have in Jesus.

6. Application

Each day is a gift from God. What might we be willing to lose each day to let our Lord have the gain of His Kingdom? May we be able to give up some so that others may gain Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thank you pastor Joe for the opportunity to say a few words. I have just published a memoir concerning the 10++ year journey as a caregiver for my wife suffering Alzheimer's disease. In that regard much loss + and gain per this morning's topic. Copies of my writing are at the rear. Everyone is welcome to take a copy. It is free.

There is no preparation for being a caregiver. You are thrust into situations requiring decisions in medical care, legal questions, overwhelming financial burden and being separated from your loved one. In the years of the journey many lessons were learned well and some not so well. As I tell my grandson it is ok to make mistakes just try to learn and not repeat them.

One of the common issues with Alzheimer's is the tendency to isolate. Every case is different, but many symptoms are common. In our case Sue stopped going to church and would not go to family events. Once she was in a nursing home I realized I too was isolated, overcoming that proved to be a difficult task. One of my first decisions was to rejoin a church community.

Along the way we were blessed by some excellent nursing homes, hospice organizations, caregiver support groups; all helped our family along the way. The journey ended 18 months ago with my wife of 55 yrs passing away.

I have done a lot of reading and gone to a few seminars on research into Alzheimer's. There are actually some things we can all do to maintain our brain health.

1. Be physically active- I see pastor Joe almost every morning out walking on the canal.
2. Keep your health checkups current. It is so easy to delay the colonoscopy.
3. Have a healthy diet- with the gift of diabetes I have that one covered easily.
4. Be social- interesting that talking to total strangers is very good for the brain because it makes you think. A few years ago pastor Joe was a total stranger to me.

I refer to some books in the memoir that are readily available as used items on ebay for below \$5 (with free shipping).

Has the journey been difficult YES-- but as we have heard problems are part of life and opportunities to learn and grow with God's help. That does not make the pain of life losses any less.

One final note 65 years ago my grandfather liked that I went to church. He had never been part of a church group. He said for him being a "good person" was what was important. With that he was content with whatever the afterlife presented. He had a small chicken farm in south Jersey that I spent a lot of time at. When going to get feed for the chickens in his Studebaker pickup he would stop by at friends and neighbors along the way to check on them = offer to run errands and staying connected. His mission was to be a positive force in other people's lives.

My hope with God's help I can be that also. Thank you for your attention.

Jesus says in John 12:24, “***Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.***” A kernel of wheat needs to be buried in order to produce more wheat. Jesus died and rose from the dead so that the sins of all of us would be forgiven. Through Jesus, we now have eternal life.