

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
March 1, 2015**

**Mark 8:31-38**

**Lent is for Sinners... Who Must Bear a Cross**

- 1. Consider Christ's cross**
- 2. Take up your cross**
- 3. Exchange it someday for a crown**

Hymns: "Lamb of God" – "The Power of the Cross" – Distribution: 465, 120  
– Closing: 114 (1,2)

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

**Mark 8:31-38 –**

**31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."**

**34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

**38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."**

They seem so natural. They seem so fitting. We see them all over Christian churches. They come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. They are made of wood and metal.

They come in many different styles:

- Roman
- Greek
- Celtic
- Missionary
- Anchor
- Budded
- Coptic
- Maltese
- Jerusalem
- Fitch
- Calvary
- Orb

They are so numerous that they almost seem second nature to a Christian. What is it? THE CROSS. Here at Holy Trinity we feature many of them in our sanctuary, our school, and our gym. You probably have a number of them adorning your house.

This common symbol has an uncommon meaning to us Christians today. Today we will learn from Jesus' teaching about the cross in our Gospel for today, Mark 8:31-38. We are continuing our sermon series that we are following on these Lenten Sundays called "**Lent is for Sinners.**" This morning we see that "**Lent is for Sinners... Who Must Bear a Cross.**"

## **1. Consider Jesus' cross**

We read in the Gospel, "(Jesus) then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Jesus had a clear Lenten teaching for his disciples on that day. Why would he be teaching this at that time? If you read the first seven chapters of the Gospel of Mark, you'll notice that Jesus had done a thorough and clear job of teaching his disciples that he was the

powerful Son of God. Miracle after miracle demonstrated this, all the way up to the feeding of the 4000 earlier in Mark 8. Because Jesus had done such a good job of teaching this, his disciples not only were beginning to grasp that he was the Son of God, but also that he was the Messiah who had been promised in the Old Testament.

**Now Jesus had to take his teachings farther with them and teach them about the work he had come to do as the Messiah. These teachings could be summed up in the words “redemption,” “sacrifice,” and “atonement.” It had to do with a cross.** The Old Testament had clearly predicted how the Messiah would be the suffering Servant of the Lord, and Jesus taught his disciples exactly how this would be fulfilled. His crystal clear knowledge of this is staggering. The process was explained. The enemies were identified. And it was all done plainly now with parables or proverbs.

Jesus’ teaching was so clear that it brought protests from the mouth of Peter. Can you imagine the disciples’ faces as Jesus taught them these things? Can you imagine some of the quiet comments they gave each other? Such looks and murmuring would inevitably take place because of the misconceptions of the nation concerning what the Messiah would come to do. Plenty of Old Testament passages described his victory and his conquest. Plenty of them described his triumph over God’s enemies. So what was all this explanation about Jesus having to undergo rejection and suffering, and about him being killed? This did not sound like the Messiah that people were awaiting in their day and age! Therefore, Peter undertook a bold move. He pulled the Teacher aside and began to rebuke and instruct him.

Jesus acted swiftly and decisively. He would have nothing to do with what Peter was saying. In fact, this was such an important moment that Jesus did not merely reply to Peter himself, but he turned and addressed the rest of the disciples at the same time: *“Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men!”*

Jesus well knew that the point of him coming to this world was not about:

- Himself
- Glory
- Comfort
- Prosperity

**It was about him coming to be the suffering Servant to fulfill the plan of God. It was about his suffering and death for the sin of the world. It was about his humiliation that would lead to his resurrection and his return to heaven to his Father’s side.**

Can you see why this was a strong temptation that Peter laid before Christ? It was quite similar to how the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He tempted him to “go for the glory” by ruling the kingdoms of the world. He tempted him to “make his own plan” by turning stones to bread. He was tempting him to choose another path besides the one laid out for him as the suffering Servant of the Lord. Therefore, Jesus gave a strong reply to Peter and called that temptation what it was: Satanic. And he made sure all the disciples understood how contrary to his work Peter’s suggestion had been!

This is our first lesson this morning as Jesus teaches us about the cross as well. Consider his cross! And thank God for it!

This Lent as we do just that, zero in on a word that is very unique, the word “must.” Jesus said, “I must go to suffer and be killed and rise again.” He must. Did he have to?

I recently read about the courageous rescue of two children from a burning house in Cleveland. Firefighters were summoned to the house and arrived when a woman also drove up and screamed that two of her children were still inside. Inside were her 2-year old and 7-year old. Immediately one of the firefighters kicked in the front door, jumped over the fire and ran up the burning steps. Another went around back and climbed to the third story, where he found the unconscious 7-year old. With the 2-year old still inside, two other men entered the home and ran up to the third floor again. They found the unconscious child and made their way down the stairs. The one not carrying the

child fell through the stairs and got stuck. The first man kept going with the child and made it out. The other firemen rescued their stuck partner and miraculously, no one died in the fire that day.

If you ask a firefighter why they would risk their life to enter a burning building in that way, what will they say? They will often say, "I had to." By the nature of what they do, they are compelled to do such acts that imperil their own lives. They "must."

Why would Jesus face the cross that was laid before him? He must. It is his Father's will and his own mission. He will not let sinners die in hell forever, suffering what they have justly deserved. He must save them. **As we think about Jesus' teaching today about the cross, we begin by considering his own cross, and take great comfort in our salvation.**

## 2. Take up your own cross

Jesus, however, has much more to teach his disciples. On that day, he did not only speak about his own cross. We read, *"Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: '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. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?'"*

Jesus had another teaching that day. **Not only was his cross necessary; they must carry a cross as well.**

The first striking thing we see about this teaching is that it is necessary for anyone who would be a follower of Christ. Jesus called the whole crowd that was accompanying him to hear this. He said that this was true for anyone who wished to follow him. This was a teaching for all his followers! They "must!"

This teaching of Jesus is not like the "Lenten sacrifices" that we hear Christians often take at this time of year. Oftentimes you'll hear that a person has decided to give something up for Lent. It could be chocolate or desserts or coffee or some form of entertainment or something else that they like. Why might they do that? It

is a voluntary way for them to be reminded that Christ had to sacrifice for our salvation. Their sacrifice is not intended to pay for their salvation in any way, but to remember and appreciate Christ's sacrifice.

The cross that Jesus was talking about was not like that at all. It is not an optional cross. Jesus' words also are not referring to the general trials that come upon us in a sinful world, such as sickness or general hardships. He is talking specifically about the repercussions and treatment that his followers will receive because they follow the cross of Christ through this world. The Christian's life is not about:

- Themselves
- Their own glory
- Their own comfort
- Their own prosperity

**It is about self-denial, and the crosses that will naturally come when the world recognizes whom they follow.**

His example is a stark one. Jesus talked about them "saving their life," yet "losing" it eternally. Do you understand what he's saying?

If he "saves his life," they will lose their eternal life because he must give his life for the sin of the world. In the same way, during their dangerous times of persecution that would come upon them in their day and age, if they would "save their life" by denying the cross and the Savior who died on it, they would lose their life eternally. There would be dangers like that ahead of them – "crosses," as Jesus put it. And the temptation would be to deny Christ and to save their own lives.

A Lenten illustration of this would be Peter himself. Remember what happened to him in the courtyard when Jesus was on trial before the high priest and the Jewish ruling Council? He was out there at night warming himself by a fire when he was asked three times whether he was one of "that man's" disciples. A cross was placed in front of him. How did he respond? He denied three times that he knew Jesus and thus saved his own life. He protected and looked out for himself. But if that was the path he would continue on to the end of his time on

earth, he would – in Jesus’ words – be “losing his life” eternally.

This is the necessary road for every Christian. Crosses will come because of the hostile world around us, the same world that was hostile at Christ’s first coming. How might these come?

- When you speak up in science class to let people know that you believe God created the world in six ordinary days as Scripture teaches, what will the reaction be?
- Teens, when you go against peer pressure to attend the beer party, or you stand up for someone that others are picking on, what do you think will happen?
- What will happen when you confront an old church friend who has strayed from God’s house and from worship, what might the reaction be?
- When you honestly bring up your concerns about your cousin’s living situation, since she has moved in with her boyfriend, what will the result be?
- When people find out that you believe the Bible’s teaching that only Christ is the Way to heaven, what will the reaction be?
- If you own a flower shop and refuse service for a gay wedding, what might happen?

Will you:

- Face confrontation?
- Lose friends?
- Create a family rift?
- Endure criticism?
- Lose business?
- Lose an advantage?
- Lose a promotion?
- Lose popularity?
- Bear a cross?

**Jesus clearly tells us that crosses will come that must be borne. Our reaction is to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.**

When we have failed to stand up for Christ and carry a cross behind him, may we flee back to his cross again. May we come to the cross

that paid for the sin of the world as the Lamb of God gave his life for us, confess that sin, and pray that he would give us strength to follow him faithfully through this life!

### **3. Exchange it someday for a crown**

That leads to the final words of Jesus, who talks about the day when bearing crosses will be over: *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”* Jesus taught the crowd that day that being ashamed of him and his cross would lead to an unfavorable judgment on Judgment Day, but for the ones who have believed in him, carrying their crosses as they have come, eternal life is gained.

Later on the Apostle Paul would learn that lesson so well. As a young, up-and-coming Pharisee, he had it all. His future was so bright in a worldly way as he was a leader in persecuting the church of Jesus. But he would later write in Philippians 3: *“I was circumcised on the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”*

So when you see the cross up front, remember first of all the burden of our sins and guilt that Christ had to carry for you and for me. Yet also be reminded that you carry one out of this building when you go into the world. You carry one in the name of Jesus. On days when we are faced with a cross and with persecution from this world, may we say with the hymn writer:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,  
The emblem of suff'ring and shame;  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and  
best, for a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
Till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it someday for a crown. Amen.