

Luke 9:18-27

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[0 : 00] I'm going to a series on daily things. So you may have missed them, but you may have looked at it. How God daily bears the sound.! Daily Repentance.

Daily Repentance. I told someone yesterday, so that can sound very much fun. Daily Repentance. So it's from Luke 9, verse 23. Can you hear that? And Jesus said to all, if anyone would come after me, that means if you want to go after Jesus, you want to be a follower of Jesus, and you want to empower God to come in, and if anyone would come after me, you have to deny yourself, but deny yourself, and take a cross daily, and follow me.

And what I want to do this morning is in lots of ways, I'm different from what I normally do. Sometimes you start preparing a sermon and it goes off in a direction that you didn't envisage it going.

And I felt that this week. It's not certain that I thought I could preach on this verse. And so as I talk about daily repentance, I'm going to apply it really narrowly.

I think sometimes we come to this verse and actually you think, let him deny yourself. We may have lent in our mind giving up chocolate, or giving up alcohol, or giving up things.

[1 : 40] But actually, I don't think the verse is really about that. There's lots of application that you can make from these passages, from this passage, that I'm not going to make this morning.

I'm going to try it in one way. I'm going to zero in on something. How can we be the people of God and the people of God wants us to be in a culture that is increasingly pushing the church to the margin of society?

That increasingly our views and particularly our ethics, what we believe about how we should live, are no longer viewed as dated.

People don't think about Christianity, that it's dated. They now think that it's dangerous to live in that way. How can we be the people of God as our culture pushes us further and further to the edge, to the margin of society, so that we often feel like outsiders looking in?

Will our church, or this church, or this country, have a future, or will it have future? will we see the statistics of rapidly declining church attendance continue to the point where the church disappears and says, will that be a case?

[2 : 58] What I want to look at this morning is I want to look at the problem, which we're going to spend more time than I usually would, and then we're going to look at the solution. And so let's look at the problem and try and set it up.

Our world thinks in a certain way. And the problem is what sociologists would call expressive individualism. Expressive individualism.

What does that mean? It means me-ism. Right? So children, you can understand that. Me-ism. A way of thinking where I'm at the center of the world, and I'm at the center of my culture, and I'm at the center of all my decision-making, and I'm at the center of all my decisions and desires, and I'm at the center of what drives me, and I'm at the center of energy.

And it's a script and a story that we all live by. It's a subconscious way of thinking of how we operate and make decisions in our life.

And it's one of the Western scripts. It's one of the Western stories that we live by expressive individualism. Me-ism. A hyper-autonomy that we define reality by the script.

[4 : 15] And it says, doesn't it, my purpose in life is to find my identity. That's the big thing. It's my purpose in life to find my true self. That is, my identity, who I am, is forged.

It is found. My identity, my job is to discover what that is. And I then, when I've discovered it, I need to express it and I need to live it out.

And the highest possible good is my personal freedom. And my self-fulfillment. That's the big thing. That's the point in life.

And you might do that and think, well, of course, that's how the world ends up. That's what I think. So many people see how the world operates here. And it's filled with stories. So you see this story played out again and again in the media.

You see this story played out in TV shows. You certainly see every children's film that's been produced, I think, in the last 20 years. that the man or woman and the boy or girl or not only the teenager, they break free of the constraints of their family.

[5 : 33] And they break free of the consumerism and all the constraints of consumerism. And they break free against the constraints of Western society. and they leave it all behind.

And they forge a new identity. And they discover myself. And it is freedom. That's the narrative. That's the way that our world lives. We have endless freedom. And we have so many choices. We choose our career.

We choose our education. We have freedom of movement. So in normal times, you can travel basically almost anywhere with your passport. You're free. And you're ready, readily being accepted.

And that is a profoundly Western freedom. We've got the freedom of choices, haven't we? Think of any choices to that. So 20 years ago when I started shooting, you'd go to the shop and there'd be the big orange.

[6 : 35] Remember the big orange? Same old blades. Or maybe there'd be a Wilkinson sword razor or a Gillette razor and there were two blades. It was revolution.

But now, you go into the market and you can get a cord blade with a lupin strip that will give you a massage and shave your face at the same time. There's enormous choices there.

You can buy bread. Someone says, go to the shop, buy a loaf of bread. It's the most complex thing of all, isn't it? You can buy this. There's just everything in there. All types of bread. And so we have, don't we, enormous choices more so than any other generation.

We have freedoms which are staggering. We have infinite freedom in our culture. You can even choose the gender, can't you? So we're told. But you can't.

But that's what our world tells us, isn't it? That's the narrative of the world. Maybe you want to be free. Choose where you want to be. And if you don't, don't you, and I don't, despite our remarkable freedom, weapons, and the people that we live amongst, and the culture that we are in is struggling terribly with our meaning, and community.

[7 : 56] And that is because of this. That is because meaning and community come with deep connection to other people. that's how you forge community and meaning.

And that comes at the cost of personal freedom. And so if I'm going to know deep meaning, and I'm going to know community, that means I'm going to have to give up self-made freedom.

I'm often willing to do that. And the people in that culture certainly are willing to do that. And so in church life, if you and I want to experience what does it mean to be deeply connected to our other brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, what that's going to mean for you to know deep connection in the community is you're going to need to forego your personal freedom to order to do that.

And this is the end that we breathe. It's like the fish that swims in the water and is completely unaware of the water around him. The fish doesn't even realise it's in water, it's just the way it is. And we swim in a culture that we've increased in saccharity and a post-Christian worldview that says God is irrelevant and God is bad.

[9 : 22] And so what's most important is this. What do you see children in school? You're children in school will pursue who you are, your personal freedoms.

And when you discover who you are, then you express it to the world you live in. Certainly the message in schools. Certainly the message in children's films I've seen. My guess is that you and I, even as adults, are more affected by this than we get to admit.

We're really aware. Culture is around us in ways, sometimes, which we're entirely unconscious of. And we begin to operate in ways that we're not even aware of.

We're swimming in the waters of the world. world. I want to suggest you as Christians, very clearly and very defiantly this morning, that if you would describe yourself as a follower of Jesus, we live in a different story.

We are not self-actualizing, self-identifying, autonomous human beings that are entirely free to do whatever they want.

[10 : 32] in fact, God has created us in his image. Male and female, for community. And we are created in the image of a communal God.

So who is God? There is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And he existed before you and he existed before this world was made and he existed, he has always existed into eternity.

And it was called lonely in eternity, is that why he made the word of course not? In eternity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit enjoyed intimate fellowship, community, for all eternity.

God created us in his image, not to be autonomous silos, but to exist within the context of community and relationship.

And so we need to think differently to our world. So let's get to the Bible, let's go to our verse, here is the solution, that's the problem.

[11 : 59] And Jesus has a very countercultural statement to say to us into our world. He says, He says to all, the offering goes out to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny self and take him his cross daily upon you.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life and might save it, will be saved it. For what is the prophet of man who keeps the whole world and loses his own self.

Jesus' message is so radically countercultural to a world where the highest goal is your personal freedom, and it's your personal happiness.

Jesus' call is to die yourself, to take up your cross and to follow him and to do it daily, daily, daily. that's what did the father said. He said, when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. That's so different, isn't it, from the preachers on the God channels and different things.

[13 : 21] People like Joy, people like Joy, they say, you come to Christ and what you will find is you will find a personal fulfillment. Or you come to Christ and you can know wealth, and you come to Christ and you can know health, and you can know happiness.

But the biblical message is not that whole. It's staggering countercultural to the church today, but it's also staggering that you can countercultural to what our world preaches, and our world does preach.

And so to a younger generation that's coming up, it says, pursue any freedom you want to, and Jesus says, no, come and die. Take up your cross, come and follow me.

And so apprenticing Jesus, that is what following Jesus means, is what discipleship means. It means being an apprentice. So you have a girl who leaves school, she wants to be a carpenter, she works with a carpenter, and she sees how the carpenter works, and how the carpenter acts, and she sees how he behaves, and she is apprenticed by him, or the guy who leaves school and he wants to be an electrician, so he is an apprentice to an electrician, and he follows him around, and he sees him, he begins to work, and he gets feedback.

They observe, they follow, they watch, they copy, they do, they get feedback. That's what discipleship does. That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It means to be an apprentice of Jesus.

[14 : 56] And so apprenticing from Jesus means that we learn from Jesus, and we learn what it means to live like Jesus, and we learn what it means to love like Jesus. And so how did Jesus live? when you look at how he did it, you notice that he lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father, and self-sacrificial love towards others.

And our lives are to love like that, as followers of Jesus. It's what it means to be a disciple and apprentice. We cannot live a cross-sheet life, a life of self-denial, a life of laying down our lives to follow Jesus, and at the same time to pursue personal freedom at any cost.

You can't have both those things. Those two things are at all. So as John Scott says, it is either Christ on the throne and self on the cross, or self on the cross and Christ on the throne.

And you see, when we start to believe the lives of our world, and we begin to pursue personal freedom, and forge our identities, and create our own identities, then you end up leaving their wives and children for the happiness of the world, who satisfies them in the way they want.

[16 : 18] And you end up with children and people who are entitled and think that the world owns them. You end up with men who use their money for toys and gambling instead of investing in the

kingdom of God.

women who affect only their own wants and their own needs and nothing but the needs of others. Men who shun their responsibility and fail to lead their family to shepherd their children and pursue the heart of their wife.

And women consumed by envy and bitterness because they've not got what others have got, and they deserve it. that we live by a different story.

Jesus calls us to die to that, to die to ourselves, to follow him. And our lives as Christian brothers and sisters in a church family ought to scream to a watching world that Jesus is infinitely more valuable than any kind of world has offers.

Infinitely more valuable. Because that is the way that Jesus looks at life. What was Jesus' goal in life? Jesus' highest goal was not self-fulfillment, not his own personal happiness.

[17 : 50] Jesus' aim in life was a giving of himself. So come with me to be given to. It's a really famous passage. And we often quote it.

We don't often quote the first parliament. So in Colossians 2, verse 3, Paul says, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. So what are we to be like Christ Jesus?

It begins through verse 6. Though he was in the form of God, do not consider equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself.

He took on human nature literally. He gave of himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man and being found in human form.

[18 : 56] He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of the dead, being dead on the cross. That is the way it changed. A life of self-sacrificing denial, of laying down his life for the sake of others.

And so what I need and what we need, what our culture needs and what our church needs and what our family needs, our Christians are willing to live radically counter cultural lives.

Not as individuals. Not as solo men, solo women, solo boys and solo girls, but in community, in churches.

churches. Let's go to 1 Peter, because it's so helpful. Peter speaks to a church much like in our own day, which is experiencing the squeeze and the pressure, what it feels like to be squeezed to the margins of society, to feel like outsiders.

And what 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 11 says, Peter speaks to the Christians there and he says, I urge you as soldiers, that means people who are traveling through and exiles, that's telling them, you're not at home in this world, you don't belong, this is not your resting place, you are foreigners here, you are strangers here, you are immigrants here, I urge you as foreigners and exiles, abstain from sinful desires, the passions of the flesh, which war against yourself, keep your conduct among the Gentiles, that is, the outside watching world, keep your conduct among the Gentiles, honourable, so that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may see your good works and glorify for all of the day of this decision.

[21 : 09] Peter is saying everything, he is saying, to be in church, to be men and women and boys and girls, who will live lives of such distinctive holiness that will draw in the watching world.

Peter is commanding you and I to live such phenomenal lives that it would demand an explanation from the watching world. world. And we need to do this together.

And so I want to say to you that we need one another to do this. We cannot run this race solo. The mentality of I am and I can do what I want to do and no one else can tell me what I want to do is profoundly secular Western worldview.

And it runs totally contrary to the story of I want. We're in this together. And that means practically that we will be committed to one another and we will put ourselves under the hearts and the means that God has given to us.

And so we'll desire to be under his word together, to come together to his day Lord, to make the most of his day with others, to pray and call out to the Lord together and to devote ourselves to one another, to open our homes and our hearts and to carry one another's burdens.

[22 : 39] And the world, the world will celebrate the man or the woman. The world will celebrate the individual who self-identifies.

The world will celebrate the person who is fiercely independent, who has forged their own path, created their own identity, and you and I need to realise that this Lord has one single and it's not you, it's Jesus.

And so we need each other. And a self-sufficient person will not be found in the Bible. You will not find anyone there, not even Jesus.

How did Jesus live his life? he daily walk to the power of the Holy Spirit. He daily lived a life of prayerful dependence on his father.

And in that chapter three, you've got this amazing verse where he calls his disciples, and the reason he calls his disciples is that they might be with him. there's no self-sufficient man or woman in the Bible.

[23 : 55] The self-made man is a myth, and it's a myth of our Western thinking, and we are all a product of our communities, of the people around us. And you will either be shaped by the stories of your colleagues and your friends and your family who maybe don't believe in Jesus, or you will be shaped by those in Christ who you put around you in your life.

And so I want you to call you today to follow Jesus, to dabble into yourself, and to be a church, a true community, family, that our world is actually yearning for.

Because when you listen closely to our culture, and the self-identifying, and the movement of self, your personal happiness, what they're saying underneath it, is a cry for help.

It's a cry for something deeper than they will ever find. And our job is to model to this world a genuine, authentic, Jesus-shaped people.

And this world needs to see what this looks like. And so your world is crying out for direction, and crying out for purpose, and crying out for meaning, and crying out for significance.

[25 : 19] In a world where people are looking for someone to follow, we have, we are, what this culture desperately means. Whether they recognize it or not.

And in a world of hyper-individualism and me-ism, counter-cultural living which is self-sacrificial, and generous, that pursues sexual purity and holiness.

It screams, doesn't it, to a watching world that Jesus is better, and that Jesus is worth it. Because what profit, a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl, you gave the whole world, and they lose your own son.

And so daily, daily, repentance. The other thing is that the way into the Christian life will, well, I repent then and I believe, but actually, those of us who go on to the Christian life, we know that the way into the Christian life is the way on the Christian life.

And my prayer for you, my prayer for myself, is that daily as we take the Mount Cross, which in a culture, particularly like ours, means dying to self, we experience and we ensure that Jesus is freely better.

[26 : 46] Amen.