

Sunday, August 2, 2026 - PM Service - Jesse Diaz
Overcoming Individualism - Part 3
Surrender Over Comfort

Tonight, I am going to be wrapping up our series on overcoming individualism. We've been talking about how our culture's message is to put ourselves and our needs and desires first, and we've been examining some different areas that this can impact us within the church. We have looked at individualism's impact on our witness to those who are not Christians, and how it alters the lens of compassion that we are supposed to see others through. Last week we looked at how individualism impacts our relationships within the church - it causes our relationships to become more shallow with others rather than pushing us to lean into deep community with other believers as God intended for us to do.

Both of those previous messages challenged us to move beyond ourselves in different ways. They were real, tangible changes that can be made. If I had more weeks, I could continue to find more examples of areas in our lives where we may be prone to put ourselves first. But if we were to continue to do this - if we continued to find areas of our lives where individualism has crept in - I would still be left with one question. I could recognize that maybe individualism has impacted my vulnerability with others, or that maybe I need to be more compassionate, or that I need to follow God's call on my life to spread the gospel.....but I think I would be left wondering where this ever ends. It might seem that as soon as I expose one area of my life where I have begun to become individualistic, another pops up. I mean it's great that we get to bring these different areas into the light - that's important - but what's the root of all this? Where do these individualistic tendencies end?

I think it boils down to how we honestly answer the question "who is really in charge of my life?" Who gets the final say in what I do or don't do? Who do I aim to please day in and day out? Who does my life truly belong to? The world says that you are in charge of your life, that your pleasure and happiness should be pursued in all that you do. But tonight I want to look at one of the most countercultural invitations in the Bible - one that directly targets our innate desire to put ourselves on the throne. It gets to the root of these individualistic tendencies in our hearts.

Luke 9:23-26 - "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me

and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

PRAY

Before we get into the text itself, I think it's important to see where these few verses fit into the context of Luke 9 as a whole. The chapter seeks to answer two questions: who is Jesus and how do I follow Him? It starts in verses 1-6 with Jesus sending out the 12 disciples to preach the gospel and perform miracles throughout different villages. In verses 7-9 we see that Herod hears about what Jesus and his disciples were doing, and how there was different rumours going around about who Jesus really was. In verse 9 it says, “Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.” So Herod is asking, who is this guy?

In verses 10-17, we read about the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5000 (which was actually 5000 men - that number doesn't include the women and children that were there). He feeds this massive crowd with 5 loaves and 2 fish. In John's account of this story we see that people are still trying to figure out who Jesus is here. Some of them identify Jesus as the Prophet that was promised to the Jews way back in Deuteronomy 18. After this story, Luke omits some of the stories that are included in both Matthew and Mark's gospels. He continues in verses 18-20, where Jesus first asks the disciples who the crowds were saying that Jesus was, and he then directs the question to them: Luke 9:20 - “Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

Jesus then goes on in the next couple of verses to tell the disciples of his coming suffering, death and resurrection. He then turns his attention back to a larger crowd of people, which is where we find our text for tonight. Right after our text is the account of the transfiguration, where God himself reveals the identity of Jesus, and the chapter continues on after that. I know that is a longer summary, but I think the sequence of events help to shape our passage this evening. Who is Jesus, and how do I follow Him?

In the midst of the crowds' search for Jesus' true identity, we find out that the disciples have figured it out. When they do, in all 3 synoptic gospels (which are Matthew, Mark and Luke), the order of events is the same. Jesus immediately tells them that because He is the messiah, the Christ, He is going to have to suffer and die. Then, he follows that up by explaining that following him is also going to cost them something - which is a theme that he returns to right at the very end of Luke chapter 9. I point this out to say that Jesus does not want his followers to be unaware of the cost that comes along with following him. He makes sure that everyone knows that this is not a “get out of jail for

free” card. As a Christian, as a follower of Jesus, there is something that gets left at the door when we choose Christ. Just as Christ chose to walk a difficult road for us, he wants us to know that we too should expect some difficulty if we choose to follow him.

With that context in mind, let’s jump into our passage for this evening. Point #1: Discipleship is conditional. Luke 9:23 says “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” I want to first point out that Jesus turns his attention from speaking specifically with the 12 disciples in verses 18-22 to now speaking to “all.” The invitation to come to Jesus is open to everyone and anyone - there are no prerequisites needed. But the first word out of Jesus’ mouth here is the word “if.” IF anyone chooses to follow Jesus, then there are things that they must do. If you don’t do the things, then Jesus wouldn’t consider you one of His followers. The word “if” carries a lot of weight.

I think most Christians would agree that the terms of our salvation and our status as a disciple is always determined by God himself. Most people would agree that those terms are not up for debate - we don’t get to have our input, there’s no negotiation. There’s no bending the rules or making any exceptions. That’s not always something we’re used to because we get to have our input in a lot of things in our lives. We get to manipulate and organize things in different ways to alter the outcomes in our favour.

God makes the equation pretty simple for us to understand. He defines the terms. We don’t get to slightly move things around to make it easier. We don’t get to pick and choose what parts of discipleship we like and what parts we want to leave for later. God, in His wisdom and His knowledge of what is best for us, has certain terms of what it means to follow Him.

We don’t get to alter those terms or bend the rules to make it fit more comfortably for us. God defines the terms of our salvation.

As Christians, there is no doubt that there is assurance of faith - we can trust in what Christ has done if we have repented from our sins and chosen to follow Him. But verses like this are not only for those who have not yet accepted Jesus. They also apply to anyone who calls themselves a Christian because being a disciple, a follower of Jesus, is an ongoing choice. That means that whatever Jesus is about to say next applies to all of us, including those who have already made a decision to follow Him. This should help us to pay close attention to what Jesus says next as he outlines what needs to be done by someone if they choose to follow Christ.

Point #2: The cost of discipleship. We see the requirements of a follower of Jesus in the next few sentences. Luke 9:23-26 - “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me,

let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

The very first requirement of someone wanting to follow Jesus is to deny themselves. Oftentimes when we share the gospel with others, I think we usually tell them that they need to repent from their sin - that they need to turn away from their sin - but I want to point out that it isn't only our sin that Jesus calls us to deny or to turn away from. He says that we actually need to deny our whole selves in order to follow him. This is a counter-cultural call that cuts the roots of any sort of individualistic way of life. Life as I would have lived it is sacrificed for a new life that is guided by the Lord. To deny ourselves means to lay down our own wishes, desires, and a life built around self-fulfilment - these things must be set down at the door.

Jesus doesn't just want a small portion of my life. He doesn't just want half of my life. He doesn't even just want 99% of my life. He calls for us to deny our whole selves in order for us to be able to commit our lives fully to Him. It means that every ounce of self-interest is laid down for Christ. Every bit of desire for applause and glory to be sacrificed in order to glorify the king. Every bit of earthly status to be exchanged for our status as sons and daughters of God. That's a huge call.

It can seem like a daunting call, but it's actually an act of love on the part of God. He knows what type of transformation and life-giving power a relationship with Him can give us. He knows that He has the best plan in store for our lives. He knows that His ways are most beneficial to us. After all, He was the one who created us. But in order to have all that, He first asks us to trust Him. God wants us to trust in all that He has for our lives by laying down everything that makes our lives all about us. He doesn't just want a little bit, he wants us to trust Him with everything (image of a trust fall). The application question here is simple. Ask yourself, have I just fit Christianity into my plans and my desires for my life, or have I truly done my best to deny myself?

Jesus requires something else of us in order to become His disciple. Luke 9:23 says “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” He says we need to take up our cross. Here in Canada in 2026, we aren't too familiar with what it looked like for someone to carry their own cross. To us, the cross is a symbol of the love, grace and forgiveness that was shown to us by Jesus. But Jesus hasn't died in this text yet.

A cross in a more general sense carried a much darker meaning to those who actually witnessed people carrying them.

When someone was seen carrying their cross, it meant certain, imminent, painful death for that person. Not only that, but it was death in the most humiliating of ways - out in the open for all to see. When you saw someone carrying their cross, you knew they were on a one-way road to the end - there was no turning back and no way of escape for that person.

With that in mind, to carry your cross does not have to do with ordinary troubles or simply living with difficulties that many face throughout their lives. Carrying your cross is not the same as having to endure certain things that we experience simply because we are humans living in a fallen world. When Jesus said that we are to take up our cross, he wasn't referring to things like disease, illness, poverty, a thankless job - burdens like these are not the cross that Christians have to carry.

Taking up your cross means being willing to experience suffering and loss because of your commitment to Christ. It means being willing to follow Him all the way to the grave. Praise God we live in a country where we don't literally risk our lives for saying that we are Christian, but man does our safety and comfort ever water down what it means to take up our cross. It means that we are committed to standing firm in the midst of persecution. It means that we won't waiver in our conviction because of the pressure that comes from the culture and environment around us. The cross was a symbol of suffering, and if you commit your life to Jesus, you are committing to being willing to follow him down that road of suffering if necessary.

We like to make following Jesus look easy. We sometimes take the accessibility of the gospel and the fact that Jesus' invitation is open to everyone, and we assume that it's all easy. But taking up your cross is a hard thing to do. Ask yourself, are you really ready to experience suffering and loss for the sake of Christ? Are you willing to follow Jesus if it means losing some close friends, if it means sacrificing your reputation, if it means losing your job, if it means alienation from your family - what about it if it means losing your life? I say "are you willing to lose these things" because not everyone will experience the same cross. I may never be in a situation where I have to decide between death and renouncing my faith. But we are all called to ask ourselves, would we really live this walk with Jesus out if we were faced with being killed? He wants our full commitment.

This isn't a one time decision either, because Jesus says that we need to deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily. Our walk with Jesus is meant to be a constant

pursuit of Him. Jesus is not an accessory to be added to our lives but rather the very person that our lives are oriented around. He is to be our first pursuit, not a backup plan. That's why he wants us to submit ourselves to him each day. Imagine you are taking care of a younger kid and you bring them to the mall. You tell them to follow you through the mall. If that child takes 5 steps in your direction, but then decides that they want to go and run in the opposite direction, would you say that child chose to follow you? No! Why? Because following someone means consistently going in their direction.

That's why when Jesus says we are to take up our cross, he also means that just as the people in Bible times would have known that someone who was carrying a cross was on a one-way road, we too need to resolve that there is no turning back. There is no half in and half out. When we say yes to Jesus, there is the weight of a cross on my flesh. There are things that my flesh must deny, that it must say no to. And there must be a commitment to stick with Him even when things get rough.

Jesus continues to unravel what he means in the next few verses. Luke 9:24 - "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." Again we see this countercultural way of thinking here. We try so hard in so many different ways to save our own lives, and Jesus says that apart from placing it fully in his hands, it's all for nothing. He says that it is only when we give it entirely over to him, when we lose it in the sense that all of our desires and ambitions and goals and ways of living are submitted to him, that is when we find salvation.

Jesus says something very similar in John 12:24-25 - "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. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The imagery here is perfect. In order for a plant to grow and for fruit to be produced on that plant, first the seed has to die. The seed gives itself up so that it can produce fruit. In the same way, we are to give ourselves up for Christ in order that He might shine in and through our lives.

Jesus continues in Luke 9:25 by asking "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" Basically Jesus is asking, is there anything on this earth that is worth more than your soul? Is there anything that is worth obtaining that you would sacrifice a relationship with the creator for? The answer is hopefully, no - there is nothing worth your soul, so don't allow anything to hold you back from full surrender to Him.

Our passage tonight ends with some scary words from Jesus. Luke 9:26 - "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he

comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” The stakes are high. Jesus calls for us to live as bold followers. We are not back down in the face of trial or persecution, but rather live a life that is unashamed of its commitment to Jesus and all of His teaching.

As we wrap up this series, I want to finish off by encouraging you to examine your own life for a minute. Is there anything that you are still holding onto in your life that God has called you to lay down? Is there an area that you have been unwilling to surrender to him? Maybe something that you feel like you need to hold onto to protect yourself or to keep yourself safe and comfortable? Is there an area where individualism has crept into your life? I want to invite you to bring it to Jesus.

Jesus himself demonstrated what this lifestyle should look like. He laid down the comfort of heaven to come to earth. He laid down his reputation when he was mocked. He laid down his rights when he was accused and given an unjust trial and beaten. And then he laid down his life when he willingly chose the cross. Jesus showed that he was willing to give it all for us, and so it's out of immense gratitude that we lay our lives down for Him. The only protection from a self-focused lifestyle and the impacts of individualism on your life is a life that is fully and constantly surrendered to Jesus.