

## Finding Your Self

*Eureka: On Finding, Pt. 4*

Well good morning and happy Easter. You've joined us at the end of a series – next week we start our annual God at the Movies series and we'd love to have you come back and join us. But if you haven't been here, it doesn't matter, because today's message stands equally on its own. But just to refresh, what we've been doing for three or four weeks is looking at the places where Jesus talks about spiritual finding.

It's very popular to talk these days about spiritual seeking – and I'm glad for that – but sometimes we can be less comfortable talking about actually *finding* spiritual reality. But Jesus often talks about what we can find – you can just look it up in a concordance and there are a number of places where Jesus talks about how to *find* spiritual reality, how to find God. And we're going to look at one of those this morning and I think it's an appropriate one for the weekend when we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus and what that means for all of us.

So let me read for us **Matthew 16:21–27**. And we'll see what we can find...*From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that*

*he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"*

*23 Jesus turned and said 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." 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

*25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."*

Ok, so right there in the middle, Jesus says, "If you do this, this, and this, you will *find* it." Find what? Well, in verses 25 and 26, over and over again, a specific Greek word is used, and it's the Greek word *psyche* - from which we get our word psychology, of course. Now, in English, it gets translated differently so, in a sense, we don't notice how prominent this word is.

So let me show you. Look closely at v. 25-26, “*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*” Every time it’s the same Greek word - *psyche*. But you notice sometimes they translate it “life”. Sometimes they translate it “soul”.

It’s a very rich concept, and it’s hard to translate with one word. But Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, translates this, “Your true self.” And I think that’s a good way to say it. It’s not trying to distinguish between, say, your physical being and your spiritual soul. It’s talking about the central essence of who you are. And if that’s true, then Jesus is giving us something that is a major *modern* issue. He says, “Here is how you can find...” What? Your *true self*. Here’s how you can get into connection with who you *really* are. Boy, now there is no more urgent modern issue than that. I’m constantly reading new studies on social media and identity.

So Jesus comes and says, “I have the answer. I have the answer! I want to show you how you can find your *truest* identity. I want to show you the way to strong and deep-rooted, true identity, spiritual reality.” But how? And his answer here could not be more provocative and counter cultural.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, famous German theologian - died as a martyr under Nazism - but he wrote a book in 1937 called *Nachfolge*, which literally means “to follow after”. In English, the translation is *The Cost of Discipleship*. But you know, in some ways, the word “discipleship” doesn’t get it across. In one of the chapters, he was trying to come to grips with this very story of Jesus and Peter and what does it mean to “follow after” Jesus?

And Bonhoeffer notes that this is one of the few teachings that are in *all* of the four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So he surmised that this must be something Jesus said all the time, over and over. This is the very *essence* of his message. And so Bonhoeffer summed up this passage – Jesus answer to finding your true self – in a very famous way. Bonhoeffer says “When Jesus Christ calls us, he bids us come and die.”

Because when Jesus says, “If you want to find spiritual reality, if you want to find your *truest* identity, take up your cross.” You know, unfortunately for us the word “cross” *means* spiritual stuff – some of you may be *wearing* one today! But for the original audience, “cross” was simply the worst possible kind of execution.

Jesus Christ says, “You want to find yourself? Climb the steps to the *gallows*. You want to find yourself? Walk out before the firing squad. You want to find yourself? Strap into the electric chair.” And that’s how you do it. When Jesus Christ calls us, he bids us come and die. Now what does that *mean*? That’s what we’re going to find out.

And we’re going to find out about it at Peter’s expense. Any of you have an older sibling and you’d watch them get in trouble and you were like, “Whew, better you than me!” That’s this. After Jesus, the two most famous figures in the New Testament are Peter and Paul. And what I love about Peter, is he blows it all the time. Now that’s a pastoral example I can get behind! But we’re going to look at this specific mistake he made and discover a very important teaching that comes from it. And it’s a lesson that Peter himself learned very well – from what history tells us.

So let’s start by just looking at the force of the rebuke that Jesus levels against Peter here. I mean, the only people Jesus ever yells at – just by the way – are religious people. With the morally or socially marginal, he is very kind and gentle. But the only people he calls names are religious muckity-mucks. He once called a group of Pharisees, “sons of your father, the devil.”

Now that’s bad, but what he calls Peter is *worse*. Because with Peter, there is no “son of...” He straight up calls him the *devil*! “Get behind me, Satan.” There is *no* other place where Jesus says anything this terrible to anybody else. But what makes it even more surprising is the *timing* of the rebuke. Look at **v. 21**. It says, “*From that time on Jesus began...*” Now what’s this time? Well what had just happened just before the passage we read, is the famous moment of Peter’s confession.

Just a few verses earlier, Jesus asks all the disciples, “Who do people say that I am? What’s the word on the street?” And the disciples say, “Basically they say you’re one of the prophets.” And Jesus says, “Well, who do *you* say I am?” And Peter steps up, **v.16**, “*Simon Peter answered, ‘You are **the Christ**, the Son of the living God.’*” And that was a *tremendous* moment in the history of the Christian faith.

Here’s what Peter is saying, “Hold up, I know you’re not just a prophet. Because all the prophets are always pointing *forward* to salvation, but, Lord, you’re always pointing to *yourself*. There has never been a prophet like that. And all the other prophets were always saying, ‘Thus saith the Lord...’ But you’re always saying, ‘Behold **I** saith unto you ...’ There’s never been a prophet like that.”

So Peter suddenly realizes, “You’re not just a prophet. All the other prophets point to the *way* of salvation, but you have said, ‘*I am the way.*’ All other prophets say, ‘Here’s how to *get* saved,’ and you’re the only one who says, ‘I’ve come to save you.’” And at that moment, Jesus Christ looks at him and says, **(Matthew 16:17-18)** “*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...*”

Now, our Catholic friends take that very literally and if you go to the Vatican, you will find St. Peter’s Cathedral which is literally built on top of Peter’s bones – I’ve seen them! But aside from all the Catholic/Protestant conflict over the authority of the Pope and all of that, we can miss Jesus’ main point here. Which is, “If you don’t understand what Peter just said, you’re not in the church. You’re not a Christian.”

In other words, he says, “Every other religion has a founder who is a prophet and who says, ‘Salvation is through striving. Go do it.’ And I am the only founder of any religion who has come and said not, ‘Salvation is through striving,’ but, ‘Salvation is through *receiving.*’ Not, ‘There it is. Go and strive

for your salvation,’ but, ‘No, I have *come* to strive, and I’ve come to *accomplish* your salvation.’”

*That* is the article on which the Christian stands or falls. That is the article on which the church stands or falls. And when Jesus says, “Blessed are you, Peter... on this rock I will build my church...” Even though a lot of people have disagreed on exactly what that means, nobody disagrees about the fact this is one of the greatest things anyone has ever been told by Jesus.

So are you following the timing? Jesus turns to Peter and gives him the greatest *compliment* he’s ever given anyone. And *seconds* later, he gives him the strongest *rebuke*. Well what gives? In order to understand what made this so serious, we have to discuss something that Peter – and everyone there listening – would have understood, but we probably don’t.

Because when Jesus said, “Who do you think I am?” and Peter says, “You’re *the Son.*” Probably *every* Jew in the Mediterranean world knew who that was. They would have learned it at their mother’s knee. Because the Old Testament is filled with the prophecies of someone who will come who is called “the Son”.

In **Daniel 7:13**, Daniel has a dream and says, “*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.*” Which means it’s a divine figure but clearly in human form. And this figure is going to come to earth and is going to save us by putting down all evil and destroying all sickness and suffering and even death itself. And we saw earlier in v. 27 that Jesus identifies himself with this figure, “I am the Son of Man. I’m the one Daniel was talking about who will come with the angels in great power.”

I mean, Daniel is just one place; Peter knew all the texts. And he figures it out and recognizes that’s who Jesus is – this powerful deliverer from heaven. And Jesus said, “Good job. Way to figure it out.” And then the *minute* he agreed he was this great figure, Jesus turns and says to Peter, “Now I want you all to know I’m going to have to suffer. I’m going to have to be rejected. I’m going to have to *die*. I’m going to be killed.”

In other words, he says, “Here is how I’m going to overcome the evil of the world. Here is how I’m going to save everybody. I’m going to be weak. I’m going to be humbled. I’m going to be tortured. I’m going to be killed. I’m going to be utterly defeated. *That* will be my triumph.”

Are you starting to feel a little more sympathy for Peter here? Because what Jesus Christ has done is he has brought together two separate strains of Old Testament teaching that *nobody* had ever thought of putting together. Because all through the book of Isaiah – another prophet like Daniel - you have what are called the “songs of the suffering servant.” And Isaiah predicts the coming of *another* figure, but this figure is a figure of weakness and a figure of suffering.

And that’s why we read in **Isaiah 53:7-8**, “*He was oppressed and afflicted...He was led like a lamb to the slaughter...For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.*” Now nobody had *ever* put those two figures together. Nobody could *imagine* how they could both be the same person.

How could the Divine Son - this figure of incredible power and majesty - be the Suffering Servant - this figure of abject poverty and weakness? How could the Divine Son, who was unbelievably beautiful, be the figure that **Isaiah 53:2** says “*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*” How could that be?

Now, we're given some clues. At the baptism of Jesus, when the Spirit of God came down like a dove, do you remember what was said? A voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son..." - that's from the Daniel stuff - "...with whom I am well pleased" - that's from Isaiah. *God* put the two together, but nobody else had. Jesus put the two together, but nobody else had.

And here's what Jesus is saying. He is saying, "This is how the kingdom of God will come *in* me and *through* me; through weakness and through suffering and difficulty and death." And now we understand why the rebuke, because when he turns to Peter and says, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" He says, "You are..." What? A stumbling block.

The Greek word there is the word *skandalon*, which means you are a temptation. And here's what he is saying. "Peter, you are saying exactly what Satan said to me in the desert when he tempted me." Satan said, "Would you like the kingdom of this earth? Bow down and worship me." What was Satan saying? "In your Father's way the kingdom of God comes through suffering and tribulation and weakness and defeat, but *I'll* give you the kingdom through achievement, through accomplishment; through victory, through strength."

And that was the temptation. And so Jesus turns to Peter and says, "Do you know what you've done? What you have done is *exactly* what Satan has done. You've bought into his world view. You cannot incorporate the cross, you cannot incorporate humility, you can't incorporate troubles, you can't incorporate suffering into *your* ideas of greatness and happiness. You're just like Satan."

See, right after Peter had his big ah-ha moment - his "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" - Jesus turns to the group and **v. 20** says, "*Then he strictly charged the disciples to **tell no one** that he was the Christ.*" Then in the next verse - the one we started with today - he starts to say, "I am going to suffer and die because the kingdom of God *advances* in and through me by suffering and defeat. *And if you* want to follow me, it will be the same." And Jesus says, "Until you understand this, I don't want you talking about me."

"Until you understand I did not go to the cross so you *wouldn't* have a cross, until you understand I went to the cross so your crosses will be discipleship, until you understand the kingdom of God comes this way through me and it will go this way through you. Until you understand that, I don't want you talking on my behalf. Because you'll be out deceiving people the same way Satan does."

You see what Peter represents here is the essence of Christian immaturity. The essence of Christian immaturity is, “Jesus Christ suffered so I wouldn’t.” The essence of Christian immaturity is, “Jesus Christ went to the cross so I’ll never have to.” And Jesus says, “Until you realize that’s not true, you’re of no use to me. Don’t open your mouth. Don’t go out and evangelize for me because you will be presenting another gospel. You’re going to make things worse.”

Peter didn’t understand this – didn’t understand the true gospel – not yet. Do *you* understand this? That the way to get a strong identity, the way to find your true self - according to Jesus - is the strength comes through weakness? It’s through taking up your cross. The strength doesn’t come through strength. The strength doesn’t come through accomplishment. The strength comes through weakness. The strength comes through defeats. The strength comes through brokenness.

That’s how you get a strong identity. That’s what he is saying. Now just for a minute before I actually show how that works, let me just remind you this is totally unique. There’s no culture on earth that talks about getting your identity this way. Christianity is unique among the world’s religions and philosophies.

We see two polarities in the world – the traditional way and the modern way. The traditional way is especially prevalent now in the Eastern world and modernity in the West. So the traditional/Eastern way has always said basically, “Lose yourself. Period.” See, hundreds of years ago if you went up to your parents and said, “I need to take some time to figure out who I am.”, your parents would say, “What’s the matter with you? You’re part of the family. You’re part of the tribe. You have an assigned role. I’ll tell you who you are, you’re a pig herder - like your father and his father - so go herd some pigs already.”

You know, Buddhism among the Eastern religions - which I think has much to say to Western materialism, so I don’t want to pick on Buddhism - but Buddhism formally says the whole idea that you have a self *is* the problem. You don’t have an individual self. You’re part of the all whole. We have to get rid of this idea of the individual self. That’s what leads to selfishness and grasping and all that.

But you see, the way the traditional and the Eastern view handle identity has always been to say, “Just lose yourself. Stop thinking about your needs and your desires. Do your duty. Lose yourself in the collective.” But Jesus doesn’t say that.

Now on the other hand, you have the Western/modern view. And the Western and modern stuff, of course, has a theme song that goes back as least as far as the Rat Pack, “I gotta me! I gotta be me!” Not only *is* there a self, it’s *the* most important thing. Western individualism. W.H. Auden in his very famous poem called *The Age of Anxiety* has a great line I’ve always loved. He says...

Miserable wicked me  
How interesting I am.

We’ve pretty much done away with the idea of duty for duty’s sake. So the Western and modern approach to identity is, “Go find yourself. Period.” That’s the meaning of life. Find out what you most want to do and do it. Because there’s no other snowflake quite like you! The Eastern and traditional way is lose yourself, which means your identity is your **duty**. The Western and modern approach is find yourself, which means your identity is your **desires**.

So, now here’s the point. Jesus does not say lose yourself, because when he says “find yourself”, he means, “I want you to have *a you*. I want you to have *a self*.” On the other hand, he refuses to say, “You can do it directly.” He refuses to say, “Oh, go ahead and do it.” Oh no! What he says you have to do is, “You have to lose yourself *for me*.” Do you see those two little words?

You see, if you lose yourself to *duty* alone you will become a codependent enabler to some pretty bad stuff. Might even fall victim to some pretty bad stuff. And if you lose yourself to your own *desires*...well, you’ll probably *do* some pretty bad stuff. And you’ll definitely become a pompous ass that no one wants to be around. So no, Jesus doesn’t just say, “Lose yourself.” He says, “Lose yourself *for me*.”

And what that means is he says, “Look at *my* cross and let *that* shape everything else.” See, he doesn’t say, “Die,” because that would be, “Lose yourself.” But he doesn’t say, “I died so you wouldn’t have to have a cross.” Here’s what he said. He said, “I didn’t suffer so you would not suffer. I suffered so that when you suffer, you could become like me. I suffered so that when *you* suffer, the kingdom of God will advance in you and in others.

“And only when you experience *your* crosses and *your* troubles and *your* difficulties in life in light of *my* cross - only when you realize I’ve taken the *big* monkey off your back, I’ve dealt with the *real* thing, the *real* guilt, *the* real condemnation - unless you do that, unless you look at that, unless you see my cross and then you go to your crosses in light of my cross, you will either lose yourself – and risk becoming a victim – or you’ll try to find yourself - and risk becoming a victimizer. But if you lose yourself *for me*, you will find your truest self.”



Now exactly how does that happen? Let me end by showing you three practical ways. And they're fairly quick. Three ways in which you get strong identity by following Jesus in a way that you don't get by losing yourself or finding yourself, but losing yourself *for him* you find yourself.

First, you get the emotional ability to **admit who you are**. Most people agree you don't have good identity unless you know who you are, right? Self-knowledge. You don't have strong identity if you're kind of in denial about who you are. But notice he says here one of the things you have to stop doing is you have to stop *saving* yourself.

You notice he doesn't say, "Those who lose, find. Those who find, lose." That would just be a version of Eastern karma. He says, "You have to stop *saving* yourself." That's the one thing that doesn't get repeated on the other side. Did you notice that? It's very interesting. He does not say, "If you save yourself, you'll lose, but if you lose yourself, you'll save." He doesn't *do* that. That's pretty significant.

You see, we have laws against impersonating a police officer. And rightly so. First of all, that's not good for you - that could get you killed. And of course that's not good for society. You're not equipped for the job.

And spiritually, you can't impersonate a savior. That's not your title. Your title is "sinner". You are the one "being saved" - not the one doing the saving. And that's especially true for me by the way. Remember, it's the religious leaders Jesus usually yelled at!

Until you really believe that Jesus died for you and he loves you and *he* saved you - you've not saved yourself - until you've gotten rid of that idea that you're saving yourself, you will *never* be able to look at yourself honestly. Never. Every time there's a problem between you and somebody at the office, the fact is - and everybody else can see - it's at least 50 percent you. You cannot *admit* it's your problem. You cannot *admit* the depth of your sin. You can't *admit* the depth of your weakness. You can't *admit* the depth of your selfishness. Why?

Because then you'd be lost, because you're saving yourself by being a good person. Until you know you can't save yourself, you will *never* have the strength that comes from seeing your real brokenness, the real extent of your flaws. You just won't be able to see that. Everybody knows that unless you have deep self-knowledge you don't have a strong identity. If you're living in denial, you don't have a strong identity.

Do you see what we're saying? This is the reason, my Christian friends, that it's the mark of immaturity to think the first three, four, or five years after you become a Christian you will feel stronger and stronger. That's ridiculous, because if you're getting the *strength* of a strong identity in which you really see who you are, you will be *feeling* weaker and weaker. Not that you'll actually be *getting* weaker and weaker, not that you'll actually be getting worse and worse, but you'll be *seeing* more of your sin. You'll be *seeing* more of your flaws. Because the standard will no longer be the people around you.

Now your standard will be Jesus himself. And you don't measure up. So you will be *feeling* quite weak. But you see, that's how you get a strong identity. That's how you get to the place where you have the strength of never having to justify yourself anymore, never have to hide, never have to blame shift. Oh, the strength of that! But it only comes through the weakness of seeing more and more that you can't save yourself.

So the first thing you get by following Christ and seeing his death on the cross is you get the emotional ability to admit who you are. Secondly, you get freedom from outside influence. Now everybody agrees that if you're controlled by what other people think, and this can have many different applications.

If you're controlled by what men think of you - if you're a woman...if you're controlled by what women think of you - if you're a man...if you're controlled by what your parents think of you - if you're a child...if you're controlled by what your classmates think of you - if you're a student...if you are controlled by what society thinks...you don't have a strong identity. That's true.

But do you know what? I want to ask you...What is your alternative? You know a decade ago, when I became a Presbyterian in my denomination - at the time I was the youngest one - I would show up at the meetings and everyone would be in suits and ties and I would be in jeans with an untucked shirt. But now, even the 80 year old guys are walking around with their shirts untucked. I'm going to start wearing three piece suits...you know why? Because I'm a rebel!

Give me a break. We're always being controlled by outside influences. So you don't want to be like your parents, great. "I'm going to get tattoos and dress in black and be unique...just like all of my friends!" You just swap one influence group for another. One uniform for another. I'm not picking on young people. Guys in mid-life crisis, we may be the worst! Everybody wants to be unique...we're not unique, we're just finding another group to imitate.

And Jesus asks what price we are willing to pay for popularity? For the culture's temporary definition of beauty? For money? I saw the new Nike Air movie this week. Fantastic. There's this really nasty sports agent who says, "I don't have friends, I have clients, which means I have money. And one day I will sell my company for millions of dollars, and, yes, I will eat dinner alone, but it will be a very nice dinner, because I will be rich." And the movie shows that's exactly what happened to this guy.

And Jesus asks, "What does it profit you to gain the whole world...and lose your true self...lose your very soul?" The way most of us get an identity - apart from Jesus Christ - is by gaining the world. These are our idols - money, love, comfort, titles - and we say, "I'm gaining the world," but you're *losing your soul*. You're losing your identity. You don't have any freedom. You're weak. Why? You're weak because you are under control. You can't look at your peer group - all dressed in black - and say, "You're not my life." But they *are* your life. They are your identity.

You can't look at your career and the amount of money you're making. You made \$200,000 last year, and now you're making \$20,000 this year. You realize it's not just, "Gee. I'm poor. That's bad." You've lost *yourself*. You've lost your identity. You've tried to gain the world, but you lost yourself.

Well, how in the world can you be *free* from the world? And the answer is only when what Jesus Christ thinks of you is more important. Apart from that, you're just going to go from one part of the/ world that controls you to another. *But...*the only way to become that strong...Wouldn't it be great to be that strong? Wouldn't it be great to be so strong that you could look at *anything* and say, "You're not my life. You're a good thing, but you're *not* my life. I can take you or leave you. But you're not my *identity*. You're not my *soul*"?

Wouldn't it be great to have that kind of strength? You would be unbelievably strong. Do you know the only way to get there? Only when God pulls them out from under you. Every time somebody says they're going to marry you and then they don't, some great career falls through, you know what's going on. A cross. Right? We call those crosses.

Terrible things will happen in life, but until you see their transparency, until you see their meaninglessness, until you see how much they've controlled you - until they're essentially pulled out from under you through suffering and trouble - you will never get the strength of being able to look at everything in the world and say, "You're not my life! I've lost the world to gain my soul, because before I had gained the world and I lost my soul."

And the *only* way that happens is through suffering. The only way you move on from strength to strength is through the weakness of *losing* things in the troubles of life. And the kingdom of God moves forward through your life and gives you the strength of no longer caring about the world. Actually you can, for the first time, really begin to care for the world the way God does. But that only happens through the weakness of having pieces of the world pulled out from under you.

If you want identity you have to know who you are. If you want identity you have to have freedom from outside influences. And Lastly, you get purpose, you get a mission. “Follow me.” I’ll tell you something. Purpose leads to strength. Do you know why? It all comes down to this. When Jesus asks, “What would you give in exchange for your soul? What could you do?”

Think of the value of the soul. Think of the value of the self. What would you give in exchange? Do you know what? Jesus is actually asking a pretty cagey question, because if he turns to the Father and says, “What would you pay for their souls?” the Father says, “I know what I’d pay. I’d give anything. I’d give my own Son.”

Now let me close up this way. Let me talk to Christians first for a second. Christian friends, some of you right now are going through some terrible times. Bad things are happening in your life. Troubles. Crosses. What are you doing about it? You are to look at your cross in light of his cross. And I’ll suggest two ways. First of all, Jesus’ cross challenges your wisdom. Do you know why? Because your heart right now is saying, “God has let me down.”

But the cross says to your heart, “Don’t be silly. God would not let you down.” And besides that, Jesus Christ went through all these same things. Jesus Christ lost his job. Jesus Christ lost all his money. He was stripped of every earthly possession. Jesus Christ lost all his friends. Jesus Christ was abandoned. Jesus Christ suffered and died, and the kingdom of God went forward. So when you look and say, “God couldn’t be doing anything good in my life right now,” the cross of Jesus Christ challenges your wisdom and comes at you and says, “Why not?”

But the cross of Jesus Christ also challenges your fears, because the other thing your heart is saying besides God let you down when things go wrong is, “Ah! You’re a fool. You’re a jerk. You’re a failure.” The cross of Jesus Christ comes and says, “No. God the Father *emptied* heaven of its most prized possession in exchange for you.”

God the Father spent the family fortune. God the Father gave *His Son*. Now you think He is going to abandon you, now? Of course not! He gave *His Son* in exchange for your soul. He is not going to give up on you now. Christian friends, look at what your cross is now in the light of the big cross. That's how the kingdom of God goes forward. Don't be immature anymore.

Those of you who may be seeking, here's what I suggest to you. Don't say, "Hmm, I guess I'm going to decide whether I should get involved in Christian faith. I want to see whether it will give me protection, if it will help me fulfill my fondest dreams." Jesus Christ looks at you and says, "Your fondest dreams? I'll give you something far better than that. Far better! I'm going to give you myself. I'm going to take you way beyond what you could ever dream or imagine."

You can't do a cost-benefit analysis of spiritual reality. Don't try to assess Christianity on the basis of whether or not it's going to give you a comfortable life. It just won't. It will give you something far better than that, way beyond that. "Lose your life to find it. Lose your life *for me*, Jesus says. You will find it."

Let's pray...