

Theme Verse for the year: Colossians 2:6-7:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the Faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

The theme is addressing believers, and perhaps those who want to put their hope in Him.

The cost of Discipleship:

Passages for the Day: Daniel 6:10-17 and Mathew 16: 21-26

- ❖ Jesus begins telling the Disciples hard stuff of suffering and death.
 - ❖ They had thought He was to establish an earthly kingdom that would save them from the harsh Roman rule by then.
 - ❖ So they were so disappointed. Peter calls Jesus aside, rebukes Him.
 - ❖ Jesus, don't talk of suffering and dying. Such a great man doing all these wonders, it can't be.
 - ❖ What will people think and say after all the miracles you have been doing.
 - ❖ So, Peter as a close friend wanted to protect Jesus from this trouble/discomfort.
 - ❖ Yet, this was the reason Christ had come. He had to suffer and die for our sins; there was no other way to redeem the world.
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- Most of us don't think suffering is of God. We do all we can to avoid it.
 - Satan whispers to us all the time that we don't have to suffer as Christians.
 - Most Church leaders and our friends are preaching to us the gospel of no suffering. Only prosperity, deliverance, Power, promotion, health, etc. Preaching what our ears are itching to hear and emotionally appealing to us.
 - That if you are suffering and not acquiring these things, then you are not blessed.
 - People will even question whether you are actually a believer. Some will ask if you are having sin in your life or are not faithfully tithing.
 - So, Peter wants to make sure Jesus doesn't experience suffering.

Matt 16:24: If anyone would come after me, he must take up his cross and follow me.

So what is associated with the cross?

PAIN, SHAME, REJECTION, PERSECUTION, ISOLATION/LONELINESS, LACK/NEEDINESS, REDICULE AND DEATH!!

Unless you carry your cross daily, experience these and follow Jesus, you can't be His Disciple.

Jesus' disciples never asked God to remove the troubles they were facing but asked God to be glorified through those circumstances. (Acts 4:16-22, 29-30).

Suffering is our calling as Disciples of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 2: 19-21)

So, the gospel of Jesus without the message of the Cross is no gospel at all. Yes, Jesus suffered, died and rose again for our sake that we may be free, but free from what? Power of sin.

He became poor that we may be rich... but Rich in What? Salvation, Grace, Love and Eternal life.

Hardships have caused many to dissent Jesus (Poverty, health challenges, delayed marriages, delayed or failed pregnancies, difficult marriage, Unemployment/delayed promotion).

People come to Him on a wrong foundation and with wrong expectations and as a result many turn away disappointed if they don't get what was promised and end up in cults, consulting witches, bribery, compromise for favors, etc.

Luke 14: 25-34

Many rejoice at conversion because a Pastor has told them that once you believe in Jesus, you are sorted. Every blessing will come your way, whatever you ask in His name you get, heaven is guaranteed. Rarely do we hear Pastors tell people that there is a cost to pay. There is a huge expectation on us immediately we convert.

- Jesus says we MUST hate all AND Love Him with all (Love the Lord your God with All of your Heart and with all of your Soul and with all of your Body and with all of your strength) Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:30.
The love you have for Jesus in comparison to the love you have for yourself, family, job, etc. is like hatred. Loneliness and persecution will come. But there is a promise in Mark 10:29-30 but also with persecution 100%?
- Giving up everything: Pleasures, self/pride, honor, reputation/fame, possessions, comfort, and our own advantage. Willing to completely surrender all and live for God. Discipleship is single minded devotion to loving, obeying and serving God. Be prepared to be to be physically poor. You are not defined by what you have or do but by your relationship with Jesus which is the biggest blessing any person can receive in life. 1Chron 29:14-18), David's example demonstrates giving all.

Daniel's life:

He was in a foreign land, completely detached from his country, culture and family BUT not from his God.

He stood for what He believed in. He risked being killed for disobeying the King's orders. His convictions (based on God's word) were very clear, non-negotiable when it concerned his God. He was willing to pay the price for the sake of God's name. No compromise no matter what. He was bold and stood firm in the midst of a life threatening challenge. He never bowed to any pressure no matter where it was coming from even when he knew the consequences of disobeying such orders. He believed, prayed and Trusted God to help him. He never relied on any other power. He chose to obey God rather than Men.

Daniel was tested beyond what he could bear but he overcame.

How often have you stood as a witness for God when your life, job/career or reputation was in danger?

Daniel was a distinguished servant but the enemy plotted against him.

Why hate him? He was simply paying the price of following and obeying God.

Why are we not hearing of resignations among Government official and private officers because of the prevalent evil and corruption? Why are they all silent, including the Church...?

Uganda as a country is now competing to be top in every evil in the world: alcoholism, prostitution, corruption, witch craft, political theft and violence, etc. A country where evil is glorified and rewarded!!

Honest tax payers pay dearly for their integrity, those in need of service providers (Electricity, Water, License acquisition or any other service all need bribes. Politicians and Leaders of integrity are not elected or promoted.

Where are the disciples and what can they do?

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is offensive. In communicating the good news of Christ, the Gospel confronts sin in all its forms. It exposes religion and culture, and uncovers their emptiness. Disciples are responsible for carrying this message. We confront darkness in the world because we are the light. Our values are contrary to the world. Don't expect a trouble free journey as we are being told these days. Suffering is a full package for Disciples.

It's now imperative for Disciples of Jesus to be set apart as models for honesty, integrity, fidelity. We need to be true witnesses to the truth of Jesus even when it is risky. We must be willing to pay the price of following Jesus to gain the price he purchased for us. God is with us and He will see us through in the end.