

Jesus, the Dying Messiah

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Preacher: David Bickerdike

[0 : 00] Keep your Bibles open, friends. Now, you'll have to forgive me.

I was up rather late last night singing karaoke. So if I lose my voice throughout this, I'll have to be an interpreter. That was a lot of fun last night.

There was a girls' group Sharon and I have been involved in, and Sharon was running a karaoke night, and that was brilliant fun. Now, one thing that Sharon and I have been doing together as well has been doing our budget together.

We're not very good with budgets. I'm not an accountant. So what we're going to be looking at tonight is the costs of things. But before we start, how about I pray?

Dear Heavenly Father, thanks for this opportunity to read from your Word. Thanks for this opportunity to hear what you have to say. I pray that you might speak through me.

[1 : 15] I pray that you would give people in the congregation great wisdom to be able to see if what I am saying is what it says in your Word. I pray that you would help me to speak clearly and help me to speak truthfully.

I pray these things in your Son Jesus' name. Amen. So Sharon and I have been doing our budget. We're not very good at it. I should be a little bit better at it because at work I often get asked the question, how much is my design going to cost?

I work as an industrial designer and I design display stands for companies. And of course, what is one of the questions that our customer asks, what do they ask?

How much is it going to cost? Customers want to know before they get into it, what is it going to cost them? We might present them different designs that look really great, but they've got to choose between them and one of them is because of cost.

Now, Jesus, as many of you may know, was a carpenter. He continued his Father's trade. He'd have to know what something cost. He'd have to look at materials.

[2 : 29] He'd have to cost it correctly. And quote it correctly. Could Jesus have been the Messiah without cost?

How much does it cost? Plenty of our ex-leaders get huge payouts or particularly in terms of government, they get nice little handshakes or little perks for the rest of their life.

There's not a huge amount of cost sometimes to them. Is Jesus that kind of leader? Can we be followers of Jesus without too much cost?

What does it cost us? Let's get into the passage. Turn with me to Matthew 16, verse 13.

It's on 798 if you've closed your Bibles. Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do the people say the Son of Man is?

[3 : 36] Why does Matthew include where Jesus asked this of his disciples? Why is it really important? Now, there's actually something fairly significant about the mention of Caesarea Philippi.

Matthew isn't writing a Jesus travel diary or blog. So, why is it important that Jesus asks his question here? Well, Caesarea Philippi in the day was surrounded by temples to all the major gods and emperors.

To understand the picture today, it would kind of be a bit like standing on Swan Street in Richmond, on all sides, being massive places full of worshippers.

The MCG for footy gods, High Sense Arena, I don't know which one I'm standing on the street, High Sense Arena to your classical music or rock gods, and the malls and constructions to the shopping gods of materialism, only a stone throw away.

So, with the area renowned for places of worship, we can actually understand Jesus' question to be, see these gods here, what about me? Who do the people say the Son of Man is?

[4 : 46] Let's pause here for a second. There is something kind of odd about this picture. Let's not forget who Jesus is, a tradie, a carpenter, a carpenter associating himself right up there with the most revered and feared gods of the day.

Moving on, who do the people think he is? Who have we got? John the Baptist? Elijah? Jeremiah? Or one of the prophets? Now, all of these people, the Jews associated with the end times.

We learned a few chapters ago that even the ruler Herod thought that Jesus might be John the Baptist, somehow resurrected. Now, if we were illusionist, Derren Brown, I don't know if you have been keeping up with the news lately, he predicted the lottery numbers in Britain the other week.

He, like he claimed to do for the lottery, he would take the rule of averages to get the correct answer as to who Jesus was. The average of these people would probably be a prophet of some sort.

So let's see if that rule works. While people today differ so much on who they think Jesus is, let's average it out. People at my workplace think that Jesus was a nice guy, a good teacher.

[6 : 08] Do they know what he taught? No. Mathematicians out there do the sums. What is the average? Is the mob really the way to decide who Jesus is?

To his disciples now, the blokes who have followed him round, seeing Jesus do his miracles, rip into the religious bigots and leaders of the day, gently healing the sick and eating with the dodgy tax men.

Jesus simply asks, but who do you say that I am? Now the disciples like the crowd have been learning who Jesus is. At times they've gotten Jesus completely wrong, but they're further along in their understanding of him than the crowd.

So what does Peter say? Peter pipes up and says, you are the Messiah, the son of the living God. The disciples had already said that he was the son of God. When?

In emotional relief, soaking wet, having nearly drowned after Jesus walked on water, then calmed the storm back in chapter 14. This though, is different.

[7 : 14] For those sceptical of Christian evangelistic events aimed at conversions, note that there is no emotional charged evangelistic event here.

No music hypnotising gullible people to follow Jesus. Question posed, answer given. You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.

Let's not miss this, folks. There could not be a bigger statement for a Jew to make. For hundreds of years before and still for practising Jews today, there has been the expectant return of a saviour who would unify them as a state, defeat their oppressors and lead them as king in their new Israel.

This was prophesied about by so many people over hundreds of years. Now that's a huge thing for a Jew to have said. And to acknowledge Jesus as having such a special relationship with God, that's huge as well.

This God too is a living God unlike the statues and idols of the people around him. We have to face a similar question.

[8 : 28] Who do we say Jesus is? Do we go with the average of the mob? It's easy too. It saves us the harder work of looking into Jesus is ourselves, looking into who he is.

Peter answers Jesus. Jesus responds to Peter.

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. Notice that it isn't blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because you're such a smart cookie to have worked out who Jesus was.

Obviously, you did well at Bible college, mate. But rather, it takes Jesus' father in heaven to uncover, to reveal who Jesus is. Jesus follows us up with a word play on Peter.

I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Peter sounds very similar to the word for rock in the original Greek.

[9 : 42] Why is Jesus establishing his messianic community on the rock man Peter? It's clear that it is because Peter is one who is confessing Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

This verse tells us more about Jesus' church than Peter. That community built on Peter's confession will never perish. There's a difficult one here too.

I will give you the keys of heaven. Referring to making access to the kingdom of God available or unavailable through the disciples' witness and preaching. Well, we can read about the apostles' exercise in this in Acts.

They announce divine pardon on repentant believers at Pentecost as well as they remind Simon Magnus that he is still in the prison of sin and his sins are not forgiven.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed on heaven. What does this verse mean? This role that Jesus is giving Peter is not unique to Peter.

[10 : 53] The role is also given to the rest of the disciples or is going to be given in chapter 18 of Matthew. Binding and loosing are two different schools of Judaism understood at the time among Jewish rabbis.

What does it mean? It means legislating and excommunicating. Jesus is indicating that in his messianic community Peter and the apostles would have the responsibility of interpreting to others the teaching of Jesus similar to the way in which the Jewish rabbis had the responsibility to interpret the Torah.

With difficult verses like this, the Catholic Church has added to this in a tradition that there is a successor to Peter in every age who is the Pope. But I believe that this is an error with Peter clearly given an important foundational role for the early church but with no mention of succession.

So Jesus is sending out his disciples for world mission. He's going to equip them with his spirit later to go out in his name and as his representatives. They'll be bound by the terms of the commission.

If people respond to the conditions of the gospel and repent and believe then they can be assured that God has forgiven them. If they refuse however they will not be forgiven by God.

[12 : 19] Now for those who have fallen asleep or whose eyes have glazed over at those kind of difficult verses you can come back in. Let's start again at verse 20. Jesus here sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Why is that? Because we're about to see their understanding of what the Messiah was there to do was really inadequate. Now Australia well we really like to choose our leaders don't we?

We pride ourselves and take great pride in the fact that we're a free democracy and that we can choose our own leaders. At the last election John Howard missed out on the votes to continue as PM partly because of some of the concerns that Australians had that he wasn't going to last his term.

But what is this in light of a Messiah who's going to die before his term? What kind of leader goes to die to be victorious?

Now Matthew marks an interesting turn in Jesus' teaching of his disciples. Jesus began to shed new light and give new meaning to what the Messiah is actually there to do.

[13 : 41] Let's go to the text. Jerusalem from that time on Jesus began to show his disciples he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

Now if we were in the disciples' position we'd be pretty disturbed about this. Jesus had only just revealed to Peter that Peter was going to play a big part in the starting of Jesus church.

A ministerial role if you like in Jesus cabinet. And now Peter is to understand that his great leader the Messiah the person who will be the saviour of Israel is actually going to die.

How do you deal with somebody who's got a death wish? There were no psychologists to call. So Peter the self appointed spokesperson of the disciples took him aside and began to rebuke him saying God forbid it Lord this must never happen to you.

I don't know how many counsellors these days would take this approach certainly my wife in her training would probably not quite say it like this but we might be tempted to say it like this.

[15 : 01] If we translated this into Australian English it would probably be no no mate mate you've had a bit too much son. Don't you remember you're the king the Messiah the son of the living God if you're going to die die in battle.

You're here to unite us as a nation to restore Israel from the Roman invaders and sit as king over us. But what is he saying? God forbid it Lord this must never happen to you.

who might identify with Peter at this stage? I mean isn't Peter just trying to help? Trying to steer Jesus towards the way of the Messiah?

The son of God really should be worshipped by such religious people as the elders, chief priests and scribes but yet Jesus is saying that he's about to face the highest court in the country, the Sanhedrin of which all these people are ministerial figures and Jesus is going to suffer and die at their hands.

What kind of concrete leader has a purpose to die in court? How are they going to lead? If we thought Jesus messianic job description was shocking, what comes next is unbelievably shocking.

[16 : 31] But Jesus turned and said to Peter, get behind me Satan, you are a stumbling block to me, for you are setting your minds not on divine things, but on earthly things.

Peter's this must never happen to you, earthly thinking, is so out of step with Jesus' mission that Jesus calls Peter Satan.

Why? Well, let's turn back to some pages in Matthew. Let's turn back to Matthew 4 verse 8. First person to find that, please call out the page number.

785, thank you. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

Satan here in chapter 4 at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry is tempting Jesus to take the alternative way, to take the glory that you see now kind of approach, to forget what he was there to do.

[17 : 58] This is kind of typical of a generation Y approach I think. Take the quick and easy way to glory. Not the best way that he's right, but hard.

Please turn with me back to chapter 16. So back in chapter 16, Matthew recognises Satan's voice tempting him again through Peter.

Jesus knows full well what he'll be facing, what it would cost him if he continued to Jerusalem, that he'd be facing excruciating death.

And yet here he is, tempted to take the easy way out by one of his closest friends. Get behind me where I can ignore you, Satan.

For it is of divine importance that Jesus suffer, die, and be raised again. Notice back in verse 21 that Jesus says that he must go.

[19 : 04] Jesus is not saying that he's going to be the victim of human misunderstanding or that there'll be a tragic end to his messianic campaign. Jesus is saying that it has been planned by God and he's required to go and he willingly goes.

Peter says, however, that this must never happen to Jesus. He's thinking the quick path to glory. The chick-chick boom step to worldwide rule.

Jesus is king, so he should be glorified now. And the sooner Peter is serving in his ministerial position under a strong king in the Messiah, the better.

on the surface, this looks pretty disturbing. It's the intention of God that Jesus is killed. It's not addressed as to why in this passage, but we know from Romans that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. just as Peter got Jesus so terribly wrong, we too need to be very careful that we don't put Jesus into the pre-fitted box, who he is, what he's done, and what he can do.

[20 : 31] We are blessed with the New Testament and God's spirit to help us understand who Jesus is, but we must never think that we can master Jesus. It's very easy for us to read into the Bible non-biblical views about Jesus, and to so terribly misunderstand him and the path that he came to take.

Well, the economic recovery is here, job figures have gone up, the Labour Party is increasing levels of popularity in the Australian people, what a great opportunity for recruitment in the Labour Party to cash in on.

But church attendance figures are down, what do we do? How do we recruit more people to be Christians and keep tiny churches in the hills alive? Maybe in this economic recovery time, it's a great time to bring people in from the church, or into the church rather, with a promise of continued economic blessing and a blessed life for those who follow Jesus.

Surely, that's the approach that Jesus is about to take in, to bring in new followers. sure, he's going to die, but his own support is quite strong among the general populace, except in his own town, that is.

He's lost that seat, people think he's crazy there. Christian leaders around, time to get out your pens, really important to write down this next recruitment drive slogan, it's worked brilliantly.

[22 : 05] then Jesus told his disciples, verse 24, if anyone to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

That is incredibly costly. Let them deny themselves. Let them deny their own aspirations, their careers, their desires, and what is the ultimate in self denial?

Let them take up their cross and follow Jesus. The disciples know full well what the cross entails. They know that the cross is a one-way journey of the ultimate humiliation in suffering and death.

Have we given up our lives to Jesus? Are we ready, possibly, to even physically die for him? That was the case for some of the disciples. There is no following without cost.

Jesus is speaking about a death to a whole way of life, the ultimate in self sacrifice, a very death to selfishness and all forms of self-seeking.

[23 : 29] Let's look at the text. for those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For those who already follow Jesus, there are two things that we learn from Matthew 16, 24.

There are two things we must get. that in denying our old life, we not only deny ourselves and take up our cross once, but the tense in the original Greek has the aspect of ongoing, ongoing denying of ourselves, ongoing daily taking up our cross and following Jesus, not to slip back into our life, to our old life of self-seeking.

There was a rich young man who came to Jesus, seemingly obeying all God's laws, and Jesus said for him to go away and sell everything he had.

The rich man went away sad. I think this man understood the cost of following Jesus. You can read that story in Matthew 19.

Where will the disciples' true allegiances lie? lie in their self or in Jesus? We too, of course, are faced with a similar question.

[24 : 55] Where do our allegiances lie? With ourselves or with Jesus? Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans that in being followers of Jesus, the Romans have died to sin, died to their old ways of life, their old ways of living, that they may find a new life in Jesus.

Those who have already made the costly commitment to follow Jesus, what part of our lives still reflects our old life? life. I suspect that, like me, one of the things you stumble over denying is materialism.

How easy is it to want to hang on and build up for ourselves material wealth? or maybe your life still reflects your old life and your desire for status or a satisfying relationship or career is costly to follow Jesus and it involves daily battle with our own sinful selfish desires.

We're going to be at times falling back into our old life of sinful desires and when we realise our mistakes we need to remember that God offers forgiveness in Jesus and helps us to turn back to him.

He even gives us his spirit to help us follow Jesus. Some friends and people I've spoken to want to follow Jesus without cost.

[26 : 31] They've said that they follow Jesus as long as it doesn't involve any of that religious crap. I don't want my life to be dull and full of religious things. It's my life.

Jesus can have my Sunday but I'm still going to go out and get plastered on Friday night with my mates. I own Monday to Saturday. Sometimes under the guise of appearing pious we too try and kid ourselves and try and justify our own desires and aspirations.

Jesus I'm going to work hard and get the best marks and go on to be a really good industrial designer in Doncaster. Jesus you'll be glorified when people see me working hard.

Please bless me as I do this and bless me in my career. Oh it may be a blessing to you. It's impossible to follow Jesus without cost.

the giving up of our own life, the denying of our own desires, such a huge cost. We can be tempted to think that somehow we're missing out on life.

[27 : 46] Friends of mine at work think that of Christians, that they're missing out on life, on living life to the fullest by giving life over to Jesus. to them it sounds like we're missing out on the best things of life.

Some of these people it's the party, the experience and lifestyle, the fun, the money, the car, the relaxing and holidays. Our followers of Jesus are missing out on life.

Let's look at the text, verse 25. For those who want to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? If we regard life as no more than this ordinary physical life, if we spend our time and resources getting as much out of this life as we can, if we want to save our lives for ourselves, we lose life in the most full of sense.

life in the world, when someone has been trying to find life and life in the world that don't last forever, when this person loses their ability to enjoy these things, then life has no abundance.

[29 : 12] If our life fulfilment depends on the health of our bodies and relationships, when these crack and crumble away from under us, suicide, call it euthanasia if you like, becomes a way to end our personal misery and a loss of purpose and meaning.

Even gaining the whole world, as you can see here, is a wasted life. Not only is life wasted on the things of here and now that only fleetingly provide a sense of full life, but also if we gain the whole world, it's impossible rather, but forfeit life beyond this life in eternity, then what a wasted life.

What a wasted life. The person, on the other hand, who loses their life for Jesus' sake, who devotes their life to the service of Jesus and his people for his sake, that person finds life.

full and abundant life is found in the giving up of ourselves in service to Jesus. The life that takes someone from concentration on selfish concerns and puts ultimate meaning into life.

That life continues as a restored life with Jesus in eternity. What can you give in return for your life? What is it worth?

[30 : 46] what would somebody offer to buy back their soul once lost? Nothing. Nothing is as valuable as life.

Friends, if you want to follow Jesus, make yourself available to him. Be open, prayerful, and ready to jump at ministry opportunities. Don't think that God opens doors in ministry, and the easy, optional, he does rather, but don't think that he opens doors in ministry and the easy option is the one he wants you to do.

Often he wants to stretch us, to help us to grow our trust in him. It is costly to follow Jesus, but we gain life now to the fullest degree, and life, and restored life to come for eternity.

God's sake. Let's have a look at verse 27. For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he'll repay everyone for what has been done.

Truly, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Jesus doesn't just leave it at that.

[32 : 02] He presses home his argument with a third four. The giving of anything in exchange for life in this world is nonsense. For soon, this world will be replaced by something new.

When Jesus comes again, the prophets made in this world, and this world's values will be shown for what they are. In the end, there will be a righting of all wrongs.

So the obvious question is, are we living like this is true? When did Jesus last, or when did you last sense Jesus, rather, asking you to give something in this world to do his bidding?

Was it inconvenient? Did you feel inadequate to the task? Did you have a really good excuse prepared? It is impossible to follow Jesus without that cost.

What might it cost you to follow Jesus? How do you budget for it? Following Jesus may cost you your friends, status, promotions, or more energy or time than you think you have.

[33 : 14] You'll be asked to give up comfort for kingdom things. Singles, it may cost you the attention of attractive non-Christians. Married people, it may cost you quality time together.

Jesus paid the ultimate price. How much did it cost him? His life. life. The life he gave us with that sacrifice is a life lived in anticipation of the life to come.

That's what gives us strength to make the sacrifices today. We can die metaphorically to ourselves a little every day knowing whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Friends, let's ask God for help in that.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you have revealed to us who you are.

[34 : 25] thank you that we have your word to learn about you. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came and you suffered and you died.

That you didn't turn away to the temptations. Lord Jesus, we pray that you would help us to follow you.

we pray that you would help us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow you. Lord Jesus, that yeah, we're going to struggle with that.

I just pray that you might give us the wisdom, the grace, and the courage to do that. I pray that you might be glorified through us as we do that.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you went to the ultimate cost and died for us. In your son Jesus' name I pray this.

[35 : 27] Heavenly Father, Amen.