

The Journey to No Regret

When I was a kid growing we had one pastor, he came the month I was born and was there through my 30th birthday. I never really aspired to be a pastor. I did feel God's call at a young age, but it wasn't until the late 80's that I began to realize a call to be what I am today, a pastor to students, families and in leading worship. It is what I have been privileged to be a part here at FB for going on 19 years now. I am so thankful that somehow, through God's grace, we have been able to survive together. Praise the Lord. Thanks for patterning with me in seeking to help students find and follow Christ.

Total surrenderness – Tom – life is a journey

The students on Wednesday night have been looking at our passage for today for the past month or so. It is a very familiar passage. **Pray!**

The Journey to "No Regret" It isn't focused on not having any regrets at all at the end of our life but rather "What is it that will mean most to us at the end of our life that if we focused on that we will have No Regret"

Interesting note – there was a study of what people regret most in their life, of whether it is something they did or didn't do. The vast majority said they had regret over something they didn't do.

Towards the end of my mom's life, she took my hand and said to me. **Nothing else matters, just Jesus.** She said it very strongly and I knew that it was for me to remember. When the end of our lives come, our relationship with Christ is what will matter most. The greatest thing she had was Jesus, and the greatest thing she could give her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren was Jesus. Nothing else matters in the end, only Jesus.

Lord, Make it impossible for any of us to avoid you. Lord, that is my prayer today for each person here. Make it impossible for any of us to avoid you. What she said in her final days help me have a glimpse of what the focus in life should be.

Luke 9:23-25 (NIV)

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

Before we start we need to understand we are not saved by denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Christ. We see Christ has saved us by laying his life down and dying in our place on the cross. Therefore as the saved we are called to do likewise. That's what we are called to do, we call it discipleship.

1. We can do Luke 9:23 by Living in God's Mercy

If we look Later In **Luke, chapter 10**, Jesus tells of the story of the Good Samaritan:

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

The Samaritan was "Living in God's mercy" which meant he was driven by God's love.

The greater we walk in God's mercy and grace the greater we can love our neighbor.

We don't do these things on our strength we do them

2. We can do Luke 9:23 Because God transforms our identity:

A disciple is not only someone who has set a new priority, but someone whose entire identity has been reshaped and forged.

You can't change your identity in this way without a radical experience of God's mercy! Without a radical experience of God's grace! without a radical experience of God's love! You might say, "I probably should change my identity, build my identity on God." But we can't change our identity by ourselves. It's not an act of the will.

There's only one way that the root of our personality can be profoundly changed, and that is by the experience of knowing God's love. When our heart experiences God's love, the source beyond anything it's ever known before, our heart will be deeply changed.

Jesus is saying, "I want you to die to your old approach to identity, and get a new sense of individual self."

"Some things happen only as a byproduct, and identity is one of them.

It means letting go of ourselves and taking on the life of Christ. It means laying down our dreams and letting God rise up his dreams in us. Along the journey, God will speak to us over and over about the life we must die to in order to follow Christ.

Now as I get a little older each year I am discovering some changes in my thinking and how to combat them. They are anxiety, worry, fear and complaining. I probably always struggled with these but they seem to be pronounced more with age. All these can lead us away from being a part of the solution. They all are centered around a lack of trusting in God so if you find yourself feeling any of these things, the antidote is to immediately turn to God and trust him. I must say Lord, I trust you at least 30 times a day because in doing so I am reminded that my identity is in him.

In Acts 12, When Peter is thrown in jail by Herod, he is shackled between two men and guarded by 16 guards. Herod's plan was to wait till after Passover and then bring him out for public trial. But the church prayed and an angel of the Lord came and freed Peter. The chains came off and he walked out of the prison.

God has done that for his people. He has freed us from all other types of sin that hinder us from following him faithfully and continually works to free us and make more like Christ. For us to live in those things would be the same as Peter saying to the angel, I want to put these chains back on. Leave me alone in my captivity. I still struggle and in so doing, am reminded that "The Journey to No Regret" is paved by being set free to live in God's mercy and a transformed identity and

3. Because Jesus is our Lord and Savior

Tim Keller talks of hearing a talk in 1971 that changed his life. The woman, named Barbara Boyd, said if someone says to me, come on in Barbara, but stay out Boyd, it's a bit of a problem, because I can't separate them. It's not like the top half of me is Barbara and bottom Boyd, you can't get Barbara if you're going to keep Boyd out, I can't come in at all. To say Jesus, come into my life forgive my sins, answer my prayers; do this for me, do that for me- but don't be absolute master of my life; Jesus, Savior, come in; but Lord, stay out, how can he come in at all? He's Lord because he's Savior and he's Savior because he's Lord.

And if this is true for us then each day when we wake up and each night when we lay our head on this pillow, this will be our focus.

It is the opposite of what we naturally do. Henry Blackaby called it being radically self-centered.

But we have been set free to be selfless and our focus should be on not putting the chains of self-centeredness back on.

As I grow older I see so much of me in my life. It causes me to want what John declared. He must become greater, I must become less.

Jesus is Lord and Savior means

I can endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution, and even martyrdom for His sake. The movie is coming out Oct 21 – I am not ashamed. Rachel Scott – I remember having her dad, Darrel come to ABY Gathering for HS students, years ago to speak. It helps us see

Christ does not call disciples to Himself to make their lives easy and prosperous, but instead to make them holy and productive. The willingness to take up his cross is the mark of the true disciple.

Ask yourself: Is Christ honestly the master of my life? It doesn't help if we can't be brutally honest. I weave in and out of this but we need to see

It's not just a matter of bending our will to Christ but God's melting of our heart into a new heart.

To be on the journey means saying, "I take my hands off my life." To be on the journey means saying, "I give up my right to self-determination." To be on the journey means saying, "I will obey you, Lord, and I'll get rid of all the ifs. Not 'obey you if,' but obey. Period. I drop my conditions. I drop the ifs; they're gone!"

It's a process that takes time. You're not going to have it all together. It's very important to keep that in mind, because if you think that discipleship is the way you're saved—that by being committed and focused and giving Jesus the priority you're going to please God and that will get you saved—you're missing the point.

Look at the order. Jesus doesn't say, "If you follow me, I'll go to the cross for you." He says, "I'm going to the cross for you, so follow me." You're not saved because you're a disciple; you're a disciple if and only if you understand what Jesus did to save you.

It means to give up the right to control your life and to give that right to Jesus.

It's not easy:

T. Pierson said, "Getting rid of the 'self-life' is like peeling an onion: layer upon layer—and a tearful process!"

Prayer:

Lord, Help us to live in your mercy, so we love unconditionally and to hold loosely the things we have, in order to give up everything and follow You.

Your word says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

"For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

This morning the call to follow Christ is there for the person God is calling, the call to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Christ is there for all who have come to know Christ.

To know Christ and make him known this morning