



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC	Following Christ in a Post-Millennial World	SPEAKER	CS Mark Tan
THEME	Living the Christ Life	DATE	27 & 28 March 2021

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Christianity has been on a steep decline in the western part of the world in recent years, as evidenced by in-depth studies conducted by the Pew Research Centre. Given the heavy consumption of the western media in Singapore, we should not be surprised if the effects of the decline manifest in the form of an increasing trend in the lack of religious affiliation amongst our youth. We all need to know the cost of following Christ and to be able to see that the treasure that awaits us is truly worth the cost.

In this sermon, CS Mark Tan uses scripture to take us through the journey of following Christ in a post-millennial world - where the cost of Christian discipleship is not concealed or glossed over, but is seen as challenging, but worth it.

FOLLOWING CHRIST IN A POST-MILLENNIAL WORLD

After the feeding of the 5000 (Luke 9:16-17), Jesus was praying alone. After he was done praying, He then asked the disciples who did the crowds say He was. Peter's answer was that Jesus was the Son of Man, the Messiah (Luke 9:18-20). Jesus then revealed the true nature of His mission, which was to suffer by being rejected, killed and resurrected on the third day. He also said that those who wanted to follow Him would have to deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

The idea of denying oneself in this day and age seems counter cultural where the focus is placed on self-indulgence. Jesus's call to carry the cross 2000 years ago was nothing like it would be today. There was only one reason to carry the cross- to the place of death. But in today's context, denying oneself and taking up the cross would be to turn away from idolatry and self-centeredness and refocusing on 3 aspects that the bible talks about.

1) What Do We Seek?

The first thing we are called to die to is **self-indulgence**. God is not against seeking pleasure, but when the desire to acquire pleasure/possessions becomes our overriding goal in life, it becomes an idol in itself. Scripture warns us to be on our guard (Luke 12:15) and to not conform to the ways of the world (Rom 12:1). For others, pride and the approval of man defines who they are to which scripture reminds us to adopt the same mindset as Jesus (Phil 2:5-8), to practice self-denial and to be shaped by the values of the kingdom as how we live this life will set us up for eternity.

2) What Do We Fear?

We are also called to die to the need of **self-preservation** – taking extreme measures to avoid the risk of unintended consequences, undesirable future, risk of insufficiency and the risk of getting what one deems as second best. For some, the fear of getting what the world says is second best shapes their desire and ambition. Scripture tells us that we should work for God and to please him instead (2 Cor 5:9, Col 3:23) as fear does not honor God (2 Tim 1:7) and we should not give in to it as our weakness is made perfect in Him (2 Cor 12:9).

3) What Do We Serve?

Lastly, we are called to die to the need of **self-servicing** one's rights and beliefs. Today's movements of 'Woke-ism' and 'Cancel Culture' have driven the level of self-assertion to the level where it is no longer pleasing to God. The bible reminds us that says that we should love one another (John 13:34), to do things for one another and help them on their journey instead of choosing to be right all the time at the expense of other people. Others may also place importance on exacting vengeance but the bible says to count each other more significant than ourselves and to look to the interests of others (Phil 2:4). For some, the issue is where to serve with their resources. The culture of self service is to use resources for personal gain, but the bible says that we ought to use our resources to serve those in need and further the Kingdom's cause (1 John 3:16-17)

CONCLUSION

Jesus said that if anyone wanted to come after Him, he must take up his cross and deny himself (Luke 9:23-24) We cannot be a believer of Christ without being a follower of Christ – that is the true cost of discipleship. In this world, by following Christ we might have appeared to lose everything but in reality, we have gained everything in eternity's perspective. God is not against seeking pleasure, but when the desire to acquire pleasure/possessions becomes our overriding goal in life, it becomes an idol in itself. As such, we should examine our hearts and determine who is on the throne of our lives.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to carry our cross? What might your 'cross' look like in this season?

2. Jesus calls upon us, His followers, to take up our cross, deny ourselves and follow Him (Luke 9:23-24). Is there anything in your life that might be preventing you from doing so?

3. Are you ready to deny yourself? What are some repentance and prayer requests that you have?