

Live Selflessly
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John 12

Today's lesson is about LIVING SELFLESSLY. Putting others ahead of ourselves. In Biblical terms we call that, "dying" to self.

Opening Question: Who is the most "selfless" person you've ever known, and how did they display a "selfless" life?

Denying self isn't just a noble quality to display. For a follower of Christ it goes farther and deeper than that. Let's look at three verses elsewhere in scripture about this:

Matthew 16:24, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:4

Being a Christ-follower means IMITATING Jesus. *"No true imitation of our Savior can ever include selfish words, thoughts, or actions."* (Lifeway ETB Teachers Guide)

Here's the BIG IDEA:

Following Jesus demands that we die to self and focus our lives and service on what God wants.

In the verses we'll study this morning, Jesus explained why he had to die. He revealed both His human emotions, and His determination to do what the Father sent Him to do.

John 12:23–33 (ESV)

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (Meaning Jesus' death which would glorify both Him and the Heavenly Father)

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

- Verse 24: A farmer who kept their seed in the sack wouldn't be much of a farmer!
- **Who is the "grain of wheat" in verse 24? What is Jesus describing? How would you apply verse 24 to believers in Christ today?**

25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- In Chapter 10, Jesus said He came to give us the abundant life. Now He says if you "love" your life you lose it. **What does He mean by, "loving" our life?**
- Ever hear someone say in frustration: "I hate my life!" Ever felt that yourself?
- **How would the Jesus of the abundant life want us to "hate" our lives?**

Jesus used very strong terms (LOVE and HATE) to make this point: We should give nothing in our life a higher priority than following Christ. If it gets in the way we should hate it.

The Life Application Commentary puts it this way:

“By laying aside our striving for advantage, security, and pleasure, we can serve God lovingly and freely. Releasing control of our life and transferring control to Christ brings eternal life and genuine joy.”

26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

- Kyle Idleman wrote a book entitled “Not a Fan.” The premise of the book is this:

“It may seem that there are many followers of Jesus, but if they were honestly to define the relationship they have with him I am not sure it would be accurate to describe them as followers. It seems to me that there is a more suitable word to describe them. They are not followers of Jesus. They are fans of Jesus.”

“Fans are happy to follow Jesus as long as that doesn’t require any significant changes or have negative implications. Here is the reality ... There is no way to follow Jesus without him interfering with your life. Following Jesus will cost you something. Following Jesus always costs something.”

- He goes on to write:

“The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them.”

Idleman, Kyle (2011-05-24). Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus (p. 25). Zondervan, Kindle Edition.

As Jesus spoke these words, He knew in just days He would pay an awful price. His HUMANITY kicked in and He confessed in verse 27:

27 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

- Though John didn’t document the Garden of Gethsemane as the other Gospels did, here he relates the same emotional struggle.
- Jesus wasn’t just dreading the awful suffering, He was dreading the weight of the sins of all mankind he would bear, and separation from the Father.
- He did not shrink from His suffering. He accepted it for you and me.
- This was such a significant moment, the Father spoke to Jesus, in Verse 28, Jesus said:

28 Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.

Our Lesson Commentary reminds us:

To glorify God means to honor Him and obey His will. In this context, Jesus declared His humility and willingness to suffer for our sins. In doing so, Jesus revealed the Father’s love and mercy in sending Him as our Savior. When we obey the Lord and accomplish His will for our lives, we too glorify His name.

Jesus continued, verse 31:

31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

- **If Satan is still active today, how did Jesus’ death and resurrection mean defeat for him?**

Warren Wiersbe writes:

The death of Jesus Christ would seem like a victory for the wicked world, but it would really be a judgment of the world. On the cross, Jesus would defeat Satan and his world system (Gal. 6:14). Even though he is permitted to go to and fro on the earth, Satan is a defeated enemy. As we serve the Lord, we overcome the wicked one (Luke 10:17–19). One day Satan shall be cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:10), and eventually he will be judged and imprisoned forever (Rev. 20:10).

- “Lifted up” in verses 32 and 33 meant crucifixion. We read in John 3:14 that Jesus said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,”
- The Israelites who had been bitten by the serpents looked for healing. Now all who have been infected by sin would look “unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” as Hebrews 12:2 says, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
- Verse 32: Jesus says He will “draw all people” to Himself. **Does this mean everyone is saved? What DOES it mean? Why is the word “draw” significant? Why not “command?”**

Wiersbe again,

He does not force [people]; He draws them (see John 6:44–45). He was “lifted up” that men might find the way (John 12:32), know the truth (John 8:28), and receive the life (John 3:14). The cross reminds us that God loves a whole world and that the task of the church is to take the Gospel to the whole world.

John 12:35–36 (ESV)

35 So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

- The time for the Jews to believe in Jesus while He was with them was short.
- In just days he would be crucified; resurrected; and would ascend to Heaven.
- WE as believers today should have a sense of urgency to share the LIGHT of His Gospel with others before He COMES AGAIN.
- Verses 44-48 are the words of Jesus’ last “message” before His crucifixion. He sums up how He provides the way for people to avoid judgment “on the last day” when He returns:

John 12:44–48 (ESV)

44 And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Many Sundays our invitation hymn at FBCW is *“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”*. It can be easy to sing the words routinely without really considering what they mean. Instead of thinking about where we’ll go for lunch or what game we’ll watch this afternoon, what if we MEDITATED on those words as we sing them?

Though none go with me, I still...will follow...

- That speaks of living against the tide not floating with it

The world behind me, the cross before me...

- Laying aside all my striving for advantage, security, and pleasure and releasing control to Him.

No turning back, no turning back...

- Jesus didn’t turn from the cross, how dare we turn from following Him?

- Dying for our sins, Jesus provided the ULTIMATE example of denying self, and doing God’s will.
- Being a Christ-follower means IMITATING His example. We can’t imitate Christ and live a self-centered life, the two don’t go together.
- Jesus taught us, to be His follower, we should love nothing in our life more than Him.
- That causes us to ponder Kyle Idleman’s question: *“AM I a true FOLLOWER, or just a FAN?”*