

Sacrificial Living

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Preacher: Roger Cryan

- [0 : 0 0] energetic or even frantic in trying to find whatever we've lost. Maybe it's a cell phone or car keys or your wallet or maybe even a child outside in a park or in a shopping area.
- And like I say, we can become quite frantic. But when we find it, what do you feel? Ah, relief.
- Almost a big sigh that we have when we find that which is lost. Of course, we never lose something on purpose. We set it down without thinking or walk away and do something else.
- I've gotten to the place where I tell myself, don't just set something down when you're moving through the house and because you're distracted with something else. Because I won't remember where I put it.
- And then all of a sudden I've got to go back and start that frantic search for where did I put that? Carol says, well, just follow your steps. Where do you remember having it last? Well, if I knew that, I would know where it is.
- [1 : 1 3] Anyways, we never lose something on purpose. It's hard to think of losing something on purpose.
- Is that even possible? Well, according to our last paradox this morning, it is. Matthew 16, 24 and 25, Then Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Well, prior to this instruction that Jesus was giving to his disciples, he really had a very public ministry.
- We already spent some time on the Beatitudes and of course that Sermon on the Mount went much longer than just the Beatitudes as he gathered his disciples there.
- And that was his usual practice. Different times moving through the day with his disciples, gathering them together. It's time to learn something. I have something to teach you.
- [2 : 2 6] But he had been doing many miracles. Healing lepers, healed Peter's mother-in-law, a paralytic man, restored a girl to life, healed two blind men, calmed a storm, chose twelve specific men to be his particular disciples, taught them, sent them out, gave warnings to the unrepentant, taught parables, fed five thousand, and did even more wonders.
- And those twelve disciples, and not just them but many others, must have been thinking that certainly the coming of the kingdom of God is in process here.
- Coming to earth in all its fullness. And it's on its way to being fulfilled. These are good days in which we're living and what we're seeing through Jesus Christ.
- Well, indeed, God's kingdom had come to earth with Jesus as the king, but not in its final form. For God was working to accomplish far more than what the people understood at that time.
- And the way in which he was about to work would be, again, far different from what they were anticipating would need to happen in order for his kingdom to be complete and fulfilled.

[3 : 44] So what we read in Matthew 16, even before these verses 24 and 25, but rather in verse 21, is Jesus revealing, opening up this package a little bit more, even reminding them and preparing them for this greater work that was to be done through him in order for sinners to repent and to believe in him and, as I've been saying, live distinctively different lives as members of the kingdom of Christ.

So what is the foundation, really, for sacrificial living and losing one's life to find it? Well, all that begins with Jesus.

Jesus is that foundation for sacrificial living. He must suffer and die and be raised again. Matthew 16, 21, from that time, after Jesus had been doing all these wonders, from that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

Well, this generated a bold objection from Peter and we can understand the shock of hearing this information as we read of Peter's response to what Jesus just said.

And I expect the other disciples there, too, were looking at each other in some confusion and alarm because this is something that Jesus had said to them all.

[5 : 34] But we know how Peter is somewhat different than the others. As soon as he heard that, you can almost picture him grabbing Jesus by the arm, leading him aside and talking as he's taking him aside.

And he says, Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you. Now, this is Peter who in just some previous verses that I didn't read had proclaimed that he believed Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And now he's quickly taking Jesus aside and rebuking him. Talk about a man who is passionate in his responses and his reactions. Well, this is Peter in full force here correcting Jesus.

Far be it from you, Lord. God forbid it is the idea. Imagine that. God forbid it. God forbid that this should happen or even come near you.

And then Peter declares even more boldly, This shall never happen to you. Again, we can understand Peter's good intentions here out of his love for Jesus.

[6 : 56] What a close relationship they had established and his anticipation of everything that so many have been looking forward to to come to pass.

It's happening right now and now you're confusing me here. This doesn't fit the agenda of what I have in mind. He loved Jesus and wasn't about to let anyone kill him.

In fact, it was Peter that declared to Jesus that he would lay down his life for Jesus. And you remember in the garden it was Jesus that took the sword and he was still at it trying to prevent anything from happening to Jesus, especially his death.

Well, then comes Jesus' response to what just happened. And it's kind of a two-fold response. What he says is headed in two directions toward two individuals.

for he turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan. Now that as well must have been a shock to Peter. But Jesus recognized something that was happening that Peter didn't.

[8 : 12] Satan was using this opportunity to tempt Jesus to turn from the path that he needed to take to accomplish the greater work that God had established, the Father had established for him to do.

He came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life, to lay down his life as a ransom for many. To give his life as that ransom for those who would hear the gospel, believe it, be united to Christ and become members of the kingdom of Christ.

And this was not the first time Satan's attempts to tempt Jesus to avoid going to the cross. You're familiar in Matthew 4. We read of how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

Again, Satan's attempts were trying to get Jesus to take an easier way at this time to become king. Why take the way of the cross?

You have all kinds of power. Well, you can turn these rocks into bread. You have all authority even to call the angels to do your bidding.

[9 : 18] You don't need to turn and go to the cross. Or just ask me. I'll give you all the kingdoms of the earth. Well, those were the opportunities that Satan took while Jesus was in the wilderness.

And in Luke 4.14 it says, and when the devil had ended every temptation at that time in the wilderness, he departed from him until an opportune time.

So Satan wasn't done with his temptations of Jesus, his opposition to Jesus to try and get him to turn out of the way and to avoid going to the cross.

And so, here we see this situation now with Peter. Here is one of those opportune times. Peter, again, in love for Jesus, was trying to get him to avoid what Jesus had told him was and needed to happen.

But, here, Satan is using the opportunity. Listen to those who love you and don't want you to be killed.

[10 : 37] Why would you be saying these? Why would you set your mind, yourself, your path in that direction? An opportunity. But, Jesus wouldn't give in to Satan's devices and tell Satan to get behind him.

Satan was really trying to take the lead over Jesus and that was not his position to take. Satan was to get behind Jesus.

Jesus was the authority over him. So, Satan using this occasion of Peter's response to Jesus to get him to turn out of the way that he desperately needed to go.

So, Jesus addressing Satan, but also in this response addressing Peter. Again, Peter must have been shocked and somewhat confused by Jesus' response, but there was no question that Jesus was speaking to him as well as to Satan.

Because the verse says he turned and said to Peter, not only was Satan out of line in his temptation, but Peter was as well in his rebuke of Jesus.

[11 : 42] and insisting that Jesus will not die. He may have been well intentioned, but he was totally wrong in what he was doing and saying in trying to keep Jesus from going to the cross.

He was speaking authoritatively in opposition, very opposite of what Jesus just said. He believed his way of how events should come to pass was better than God's.

His actions and words were a hindrance instead of a help to Jesus. Again, no matter how well intentioned he was at that time, Jesus said, you are a hindrance to me, a hindrance, a stumbling block, a stick for bait of a trap, generally a snare, a stumbling block, an offense.

Jesus is saying, you're a trap to me. What you're saying and what Satan is working through is like a bait in a trap that ultimately leads to my downfall, not my exaltation.

He recognizes right away what is happening. Jesus does. So, through Peter's ill-conceived thoughts and spoken words, Satan again was trying to get Jesus to avoid the path of self-sacrifice, the cross-focused life, and to pursue an easier path to exaltation and blessing.

[13 : 15] Jesus said to Peter, you're a hindrance to me. Why did this come from Peter? These words that he spoke.

Well, Jesus hits the nail on the head and identifies that Peter speaking out of worldly thinking. He says, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

So, Jesus is revealing to Peter something he needed to know about himself that he obviously didn't recognize and he was just speaking, reacting without truly thinking of what he was saying and what he was doing.

You're not looking at things from God's point of view. Your words and actions indicate you have not set your mind in the right direction. Instead, Peter's mind was set on the things of man.

His words and actions came as a result of having thoughts that were turned from God and his wisdom, what Jesus had just spoken, to the kind of thinking that would be more characteristic of a man certainly unaffiliated with God, a man unaware of or completely disregarding God's infinite knowledge and wisdom of what his plan and what he had planned in this case for Jesus Christ.

[14 : 44] And Peter's reaction, maybe some high-mindedness, self-centeredness, hastiness, immaturity, his way of thinking was set in the direction that was contrary to God and his ways and thus Peter's words and actions were in opposition to God and his ways and thus a hindrance to Jesus and what he was sent to do.

But not only were his words a hindrance to Jesus, but when you think of it more, Peter's worldly thinking and his actions and what he was sent to were actually against not only what Jesus needed to do, but also what was good for Peter in the present, but also his eternal well-being.

If Jesus never went to the cross, as was Peter's plan, Peter and many others would never know the saving grace of God, but instead would have to suffer the wages of their own sin, which is eternal damnation and hell.

obviously a hindrance to what Jesus needed to do, but would it be a hindrance to what Jesus was going to be doing on Peter's behalf and many others.

So Peter's objection was a hindrance to Jesus, but also a hindrance to Peter. He wasn't thinking, wasn't realizing, and isn't that the way it is many times for us?

[16 : 19] We have this initial reaction out of worldly thinking, thinking that, no, this is best for me, but in reality it's not. God has a different path for us to take, which ultimately he knows is best for us.

It might mean some sort of sacrifice, some difficulties we have to go through, but ultimately for our well-being. Peter needed to be confronted with his wrong desires and thoughts and actions for his own well-being and also for his future ministry of declaring the gospel.

And he did learn this lesson. And in Acts 2.23, this is not on the screen, but Peter declares in his message, he says, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

He learned a lesson and realized, probably like us, we reflect on our past, things we've said in the past. How could I have ever said anything like that?

But now, he's proclaiming that, yeah, what Jesus went through on the cross was God's sovereign plan. Well, we too need to be careful.

[17 : 38] The words we speak and the actions we take are indications of whether or not our inner thoughts and desires are set on God and his ways. In love for Peter, Jesus confronts Peter with the reality of what's taking place in his inner man.

And he needed to turn from those actions that were based on the reasonings of man apart from God and his wisdom. He didn't yet fully understand the distinctively different path of life and death that Jesus needed to take.

He needed a new way of thinking in regard to the path that was set and planned for Jesus and that Jesus was committed to following.

He needed to understand this about Jesus, but he also needed to understand that this path of sacrificial living was also the path that he and other disciples of Jesus were to follow if they were going to live distinctively as members of the kingdom of Christ with Jesus as their king.

So as I was reading this passage and looking at it, I began to see more and more the importance of Jesus declaring these words, revealing to them the path that he needed to take prior to what he's about to tell them about what their path was going to look like.

[19 : 10] As followers of Jesus Christ, as followers of the king, the king has gone this path and because he has gone down this path of self-denial, taking up the cross, walking in obedience to the father, now comes this greater message that they needed to know as well.

this is the message that Jesus presents to Peter and the other disciples that were standing nearby, observing and listening to all that had just transpired.

And this focus that Jesus is about to present to his disciples and that he's preserved for us really needs to be repeated in our thinking over and over again.

We need to be confronted with this truth on a regular basis because the message of the world, remember Peter had not been thinking after God and the thoughts of God, but he was thinking as a man, a man of the world.

Can that happen to us? We hear those messages on a daily basis as well, declaring things to us and these thoughts of the world trying to find and establish place in our minds and our thinking so that when it comes time for us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ, the thoughts of the world are there trying to gain control of our words and actions so that we take the easier path.

[20 : 57] And so this message, I found I needed to hear this again, but I was very thankful that I heard and saw what Jesus was declaring about himself prior to hearing this message that now Jesus once again teaches his disciples about the way of life and the path that they were going to need to take.

They were going to need to follow in the steps of Jesus. And in verse 24 he says, then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. If anyone is going to follow Jesus, he needs to be ready to live this distinctively different life than what the world presents as the way of life and flourishing and blessing.

And what does that life look like? Well, it looks like the person who is devoted to Christ, the committed follower of Jesus Christ.

He says, if anyone would come after me, come after me in such a way as to be willing to walk in the steps and be a follower of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 18] Come after me refers to those who desire to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ, the true disciple of Jesus Christ, committed follower of Jesus Christ.

William Hendrickson in his commentary words it this way, if anyone wishes to be counted as an adherent of mine, the person needs to understand that the following walk and the steps of Jesus will mean being an imitator of Jesus Christ, both in how one thinks and acts to set aside the worldly way of thinking, to pursue having a renewed mind so that they can walk this transformed life and not be conformed and pressed into the mold of the world when it comes to the challenges of life, in particular when it's a challenge to our faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

such an individual having heard the gospel and been quickened by the Holy Spirit realizes that there is a need for personal repentance.

The path he or she has been walking apart from faith and obedience to Christ. It's been wrong. Jesus was confronting Peter at this time. And he's confronting all of us.

He's confronted all of us by the work of his Spirit through his word prior to our salvation. we need to be followers of Jesus Christ like a lamb follows the shepherd.

[23 : 52] Peter had reversed the roles when he rebuked Jesus. Peter needed to get back in his position as a follower of Jesus. And such a walk first involves denial of self, to disown, repudiate, deny utterly, strongly reject, to affirm that one has no acquaintance or connection with himself, his sinful self.

Like Peter did when he denied Jesus. This is the idea of what denial means. He denied any connection or knowledge of Jesus Christ.

When confronted he says, I do not know this man of whom you speak. So the Christian denies the sinful self, the thoughts and actions when he's presented with that temptation.

I have no connection with that self. That's the mindset that we bring in to these times when we're tempted to deny Christ and obedience to him rather than being a follower of Christ and denying self.

No, I recognize what's happening because I'm not approaching this situation with merely the mind of a man unconnected with Jesus Christ and his word.

[25 : 14] I'm approaching it with the thoughts of God and so in understanding what's happening outside of me and within me, I say I have no connection with that sinful self that is seeking to draw me in a wrong direction.

When any ungodly thought comes to mind, he or she is tempted to act in some ungodly way instead of disowning Christ. He or she disowns and denies self.

Disavows any connection to the sinful thoughts and desires of the sinful flesh and pursues following in the steps of Christ.

That person recognizes I'm a new creature in Christ. I'm a child of God. With a new, brand new purpose for life now. To glorify God in whatever I do.

To make known what's magnificent and glorious about Him. My love and my relationship is now to Christ and what He desires.

[26 : 26] I don't recognize the old sinful self as having any say in how I am to think or live. I'm no longer in bondage to sin and Satan.

Now united to Christ and His resurrection to live a new life. You think back to Peter's response and rebuke to Jesus.

It's almost like he didn't even remember that Jesus said, and be raised again. All Peter heard was the suffering and dying part. He reacted against that.

well, we need to remember the full package. Peter wrote something similar to what Jesus is declaring to Peter.

He wrote, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

[27 : 30] so you're denying the self, disowning the self. You're abstaining from the flesh which is waging this war against your soul. Again, that's the whole idea.

If I know and I recognize what's going on here, and it's not for my good to give in, the flesh is actually waging a war against my soul.

Paul also wrote to the Christians in the church of Colossae with similar instructions. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry.

On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked when you were living in them. So he's showing them the past and how these have no legitimate relationship to you now so that you would give yourself over to those thoughts and those evil desires.

He says, but now you must put them all away. Disown them completely. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth.

[28 : 52] Do not lie to one another seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

So you're taking on a new way of life both in your inner man and outer man. And so you can now deny the old sinful self and have nothing to do with that.

and that's the kind of thinking we bring to our minds as we're in those situations. And many times we find ourselves thinking the opposite. Oh, it's so hard.

It is hard. I just can't. Yes, you can. We can walk in newness of life. Well, denial of the self, saying no, refusing to give your mind over to sinful thoughts and your body to sinful words and actions.

We're denying that. But following Jesus means also to take up your cross. What does that mean? Well, first of all, it's a willing act.

[29 : 55] This is a willing act done by the individual who loves Jesus and has confessed Him as Lord. The individual who's not willing to take up his cross isn't following in the steps of Jesus.

For Jesus willingly went to the cross. Yes, He wrestled in the garden as He reflected on what was going to be included in Him taking up the cross.

But He said, not as I will, but as you will to the Father. Ephesians 5, Paul writes that Jesus loved the church and gave Himself up.

That's a willing surrender. He gave Himself up for her. He wasn't forced to go to the cross. A true follower of Jesus loves Him and willingly takes up His cross and follows Jesus.

John Piper writes of what this means as well. Be willing without murmuring or God criticism or cowardice to be opposed, to be shamed, to suffer, and to die.

[31 : 08] All for your allegiance to Him or to go to the heart of the matter. To take up your cross meant to treasure Jesus more than we treasure human approval, honor, comfort, and life.

Our suffering is not a tribute to Jesus unless we endure it because we cherish Jesus. Taking up our cross means Jesus has become more precious to us than approval, honor, comfort, and life.

So the take up my cross means I see the sacrifice that is ahead of me in this situation. And I deny the sinful self and choose to follow Jesus in this situation.

I realize that I could experience opposition from others. It could be that people will speak in such a way as to bring shame upon me.

I may experience suffering of some kind, maybe a loss of a job or a relationship. To some people, even today, it still means to the point of death.

[32 : 23] But the one who has decided to be a follower of Jesus Christ is committed by God's grace and help to follow Jesus. So I'm going to deny the sinful flesh that says, don't follow Jesus.

I'm going to take up this cross of opposition, shame, suffering, and death, whatever might come upon me, and I'm going to follow Jesus.

And I can respond this way. I can deny myself and take up my cross, the sacrifice. Why? Because Jesus led the way and denied himself. Not my will, but thine be done. He said, I always do the will of the Father. He went to the cross and did the will of the Father.

I can deny myself and take up my cross because Jesus led the way to the cross. In following Jesus, one doesn't lose his life, but actually finds it.

[33 : 32] There's the paradox. And this is the next point that Jesus makes with his disciples. Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

So we're seeing the great contrast of choices here. And again, this is what we bring to bear in our minds when we're in those situations. When the flesh and worldly thinking that still abides within our minds is trying to get us to go in a way that is contrary to following Jesus Christ and his counsel from his word, we're understanding the cost that will be involved in doing that.

For me to save myself from this sacrifice that's out there, it's actually going to cost me my life. life. That's what Peter was trying to do with Jesus when he said, far be it from you Lord, this shall never happen to you.

He's trying to save Jesus' life. Going to Jerusalem, suffering and dying, Peter was saying, that's not the right way.

You need to save your life from such suffering and dying. If you won't, I will. I'll do everything I can to keep you from dying. And if Jesus had followed that path, it wouldn't have resulted in the glorious life of resurrection and the shared glory with the Father for himself and all who believe and follow him.

[35 : 10] It would have resulted in loss of life. And so it is with us. We think back to our unconverted state. Maybe there's someone here this morning yet unconverted.

The person who wants to save his life, wants to preserve his way of life apart from Christ, the individual thinks his or her life is fine apart from Jesus.

Thinking, I need to be the ruler of my own life. I'm the best judge of what is best for me. I'll determine the times of my life and I'm not ready to come to Christ right now.

Trying to save my life, what I understand and comprehend is the good life. If I come to Christ, I have to give all that up. I'm happy with my life as it is and I'm not going to change.

Jesus says the result of such thinking and living is that he or she will lose his life. Every day that goes by in rejection of Jesus and obedience to him, the person is losing the joy of living life as God designed it to be lived in relationship with him.

[36 : 21] losing his life thinking that they're finding it and preserving it. If that continues under the person's physical death then the individual goes and loses eternal life with Jesus and instead receives the wages of his or her sinful choices in eternal death and hell.

What profit is there in that? In fact, that's the point Jesus makes in the next verses. We're not going on to those verses, but he says, for what will it profit a man if it gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?

See, the understanding of Jesus and what the reality is about every individual, what is of highest importance is the person's life, the very soul of man.

And that's the point Jesus is getting to. You're willing to put yourself in the position of gaining the whole world. And in doing so, you would forfeit your soul.

And it's a question with an understood answer. There is no profit in that. It's an extremely bad investment.

[37 : 41] There's eternal loss of life without God and Jesus Christ. It's a bad investment. Well, after conversion, even after one's conversion to Christ, the individual still faces a situation in which he or she has to decide, am I going to seek to save my life in this situation?

And in reality, lose it? The question for the Christian is, am I going to avoid the cross-focused life and instead give in to temptation and the sinful flesh?

I want to follow Jesus, but in this case, it might cost me maybe the esteem of others, acceptance in this group, maybe my job, my ongoing relationship, maybe even with my children or spouse, my present level of lifestyle that I want that's important to me.

When seeking to save something, the sinful flesh holds up as greater than following Jesus Christ and obedience to Christ, you're losing out on the greater joy of suffering as Jesus did and the joy that comes from obedience to Him.

Jesus said, the writer of Hebrews said, the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despised the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

[39 : 13] One who saves his life will lose it. For us as Christians, when those times come, it's real attractive to avoid the cross, the time of suffering, something what we must give up.

How am I going to live without that? You lose it, your life, the joy that comes in taking up your cross and following Jesus if you choose to go the easy way.

Jesus said, but if you lose your life for Christ's sake, then you'll find it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For the unbeliever, the unconverted, the message is repent.

Confess Jesus as Lord instead of yourself. Commit to following Jesus Christ and not yourself. Jesus offered that invitation here again in Matthew. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden.

I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart. And you'll find rest for your souls.

[40 : 21] See that? You still may have to go through some suffering and death in this world, but your soul will be preserved. You'll find rest for your soul even in this world, in this time of difficulty.

nothing, but then especially eternally. And for the converted individual who's tempted to sin, deny the sinful self. Lose your life for Christ's sake.

You turn from the sinful self that wants to express itself and in love for Christ and that He would be glorified in your life. You choose to walk in obedience to Him.

You choose the path of true righteousness and holiness, even if it means sacrificing something in the process. You say to the sinful self, you're not in charge any longer.

I love Jesus more than human approval, honor, comfort, and life. So I'm ready to endure opposition, shame, suffering, and death. There's more gain in following Jesus even with suffering than there is in walking away from Him even with 10,000 earthly benefits.

[41 : 35] That's the way the new self talks and walks. Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Our time is gone, but when we think of this whole matter of denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus, now you've got to put some practical understanding to that.

How are you going to do that? How do you prepare yourself to do that? Certainly, you need to be a person who's in prayer for wisdom. It's in the same James chapter 1.

Praying for wisdom. As you move through these trials, grace and mercy for one another. I just have to quickly run through these. Be in God's Word.

That's where you need that renewed mind so that you're not entering these times thinking like a man. Be an active serving member of the church, denying yourself, taking up your cross.

[42 : 36] This is something we do together and help each other do. We set our minds on things above, meditating on God's Word, listening to good, godly music, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, examining how do I use my time, my energy, my money, and actively and practically loving God and others over yourself.

Jesus said to His disciples and to us, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

I trust that's the path you're on this morning, finding the fullness of life for your soul in Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for this message from Jesus that You preserved for us. Thank You for His willingness, His commitment to always do what the Father has told Him to do, His heart for it, and the actions He took to follow the intentions of His heart.

That He went to Jerusalem, suffered, and died, and that You raised Him from the dead, and now He continues to serve on our behalf so that we too can take up our cross, deny self, and follow Him.

[44 : 12] Help us to do that today, Father. By Your Spirit dwelling within us, the encouragement we can bring to each other, may we see and experience the satisfaction in our very souls as we walk and follow Jesus Christ.

In His name we pray. Amen.