***THE EASTER CODE***

**Lenten Worship Series – Week 4**

***Code Word:* Intention**

**March 19, 2023**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**Announcements and Offering**

**[*Project* “Week 4.QRCode”***(in Graphics file)* ***or below words on screen as people enter*]**

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| ***Code Word:* Intention**  ***Jesus was born with a cross in his future,***  ***so that there would be such a thing as forgiveness for sin.*** |

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| **Drama/Reading – Man of Sorrows** |

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| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#451/HC#71/SS#107 – Would you be free from your burden of sin (Power in the Blood)** | TB-945 – Wonder-working power  HC-71  SS-107 | No HT CD  HCD6-T11 |
| **SB#379/HC#78/SS#44 – Lord, I lift Your name on high** | TB-948 – You came from Heaven to earth  HC-78  SS-44 | No HT CD  HCD6-T18 |
| **SB#89/HC#161/SS#48 – O for a thousand tongues to sing (My Great Redeemer’s Praise)** | TB-59 – Azmon  TB-75 – Grimsby  HC-161  SS-48 | HTD3-T4 (4 vs.)  No HT CD  HCD15-T11 |
| **HC#162 – The Power of the Cross** | HC-162 | HCD15-T12 |
| **SB#243/HC#164 – Before the throne of God above** | TB-52 – same  HC-164 | No HT CD  HCD15-T14 |
| **HC#223 – All Glory Be to Christ** | HC-223 | HCD21-T13 |
| **HC#225 – Hosanna (Praise is Rising)** | HC-225 | HCD21-T15 |
| **HC#237 – Cornerstone** | HC-237 | HCD22-T17 |
| **SB#358/HC#241/SS#30 – Crown Him with many crowns** | TB-162 – Diademata  HC-241  SS-30 | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)  HCD23-T11 |
| **HC#248 – Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)** | HC-248 | HCD23-T18 |
| **HC#250 – Hear the Call of the Kingdom** | HC-250 | HCD23-T20 |
| **SB#223/HC#278 – I know he rescued my soul (My Redeemer Lives)** | TB-768 – same  HC-278 | No HT CD  HCD26-T18 |
| **HC#294 – Glorious Day** | HC-294 | HCD28-T14 |
| **SB#139 – He came to give us life** | TB-645 – same | No HT CD |

**Call to Worship:**

What was in Jesus’s future was not a surprise to him. The shocking nature of his capture, trial, and death was not a personal defeat. It was not a failure of God’s plan. It was not a triumph of the enemy. No, the death of Jesus on the bloody cross was a personal victory and a public indication of the complete success of God’s plan. From before his first breath, the intentional plan was that Jesus would enter this broken world, suffer its brokenness, live a completely perfect life in every way, and then die on that cross. Listen how the apostle Peter talks about this plan:

(*Journey to the Cross*, p. 166)

**[*Put scripture below on screen.*]**

**21**To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. **22**“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

**23**When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. **24**“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:21-24, NIV)

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| **SB#243/HC#164 – Before the throne of God above** | TB-52 – same  HC-164 | No HT CD  HCD15-T14 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#451/HC#71/SS#107 – Would you be free from your burden of sin (Power in the Blood)** | TB-945 – Wonder-working power  HC-71  SS-107 | No HT CD  HCD6-T11 |
| **SB#379/HC#78/SS#44 – Lord, I lift Your name on high** | TB-948 – You came from Heaven to earth  HC-78  SS-44 | No HT CD  HCD6-T18 |
| **SB#89/HC#161/SS#48 – O for a thousand tongues to sing (My Great Redeemer’s Praise)** | TB-59 – Azmon  TB-75 – Grimsby  HC-161  SS-48 | HTD3-T4 (4 vs.)  No HT CD  HCD15-T11 |
| **HC#162 – The Power of the Cross** | HC-162 | HCD15-T12 |
| **HC#223 – All Glory Be to Christ** | HC-223 | HCD21-T13 |
| **HC#225 – Hosanna (Praise is Rising)** | HC-225 | HCD21-T15 |
| **HC#237 – Cornerstone** | HC-237 | HCD22-T17 |
| **SB#358/HC#241/SS#30 – Crown Him with many crowns** | TB-162 – Diademata  HC-241  SS-30 | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)  HCD23-T11 |
| **HC#248 – Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)** | HC-248 | HCD23-T18 |
| **HC#250 – Hear the Call of the Kingdom** | HC-250 | HCD23-T20 |
| **SB#223/HC#278 – I know he rescued my soul (My Redeemer Lives)** | TB-768 – same  HC-278 | No HT CD  HCD26-T18 |
| **HC#294 – Glorious Day** | HC-294 | HCD28-T14 |
| **SB#139 – He came to give us life** | TB-645 – same | No HT CD |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |

**Invocation**

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| **Children’s Moment – Intention** |

***Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me***

**Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:24-27**

[Scripture can be read by one person, split up into a responsive reading, or as a “readers’ theater using *The Voice* version - <https://www.biblegateway.com/> ]

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| **SB#208/SS#63 – When I survey the wondrous cross** | TB-875 – The wonderful cross  HC-94 – Lamb of God (use vs. 2 as chorus)  SS-63 | No HT CD  HCD8-T14 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#627 – There is a holy hill of God** | TB-70 – Fewster (no chorus) | HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#632 – What shall I render to my God** | TB-70 – Fewster (no chorus) | HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#255/HC#286 – I’m set apart for Jesus** | TB-213 – Aurelia  HC-286 | HTD3-T3 (3 vs.)  HCD27-T16 |
| **SB#496 – I want a principle within** | TB-64 – Colne  TB-70 – Fewster | No HT CD  HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#565/HC#89/SS#43 – All I once held dear (Knowing You)** | TB-725 – same  HC-89  SS-43 | No HT CD  HCD7-T19 |
| **SB#571/HC#47/SS#74 – As the deer** | TB-559 – same  HC-47  SS-74 | No HT CD  HCD3-T17 |
| **SB#496 – I want a principle within** | TB-64 – Colne  TB-70 – Fewster | No HT CD  HTD3-T13 (4 vs.) |

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| ***Code Word:* Multiply**  **“Go into all the world and make disciples.” - Matthew 28:19** |
| **DESCRIPTION:** During the Lenten season we will have an opportunity to take 6 weeks to intentionally fast and pray for the salvation of others. The goal and focus on ‘Multiply’ is to share our faith and to develop an *urgency of salvation* mindset for those who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ; and to invite congregants to fast/pray for salvation of others. It would be wonderful to celebrate on Easter Sunday the people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior! |
| **SUPPLIES NEEDED:** a prayer box on the holiness table (clear case works best); cross which fits inside the box; prayer cards printed on card stock (on three different colors – *see samples in Graphics file*); pens. |
| **VISUAL/INTERACTIVE PRAYER:** During the pastoral prayer portion each Sunday, the meeting leader will invite people to participate in 3 different ways, either writing the name of:  1) **someone for whom you are praying for salvation** (white card)  2) **someone to whom you have witnessed this past week** (green card)  3) **someone who has accepted Jesus as their Savior** (red card)  and placing that card in the prayer box on the holiness table. |
| * Explain the evangelism “visual” * “Multiply” – fill out cards/place in box on holiness table * Prayer time as people put cards in box * Pastoral Prayer |

**Testimony of Faith – [Choose someone from the congregation who can testify on this theme.]**

**Message – *Code Word:* Intention**

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| **SB#201/HC#137/SS#66 – Thank You for the cross, Lord (Worthy Is the Lamb)** | TB-947 – same  HC-137  SS-66 | No HT CD  HCD12-T17 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#208/SS#63 – When I survey the wondrous cross** | TB-875 – The wonderful cross  HC-94 – Lamb of God (use vs. 2 as chorus)  SS-63 | No HT CD  HCD8-T14 |
| **SB#255/HC#286 – I’m set apart for Jesus** | TB-213 – Aurelia  HC-286 | HTD3-T3 (3 vs.)  HCD27-T16 |
| **SB#290/HC#7 – Spirit of God, descend** | TB-467 – same  HC-7 | No HT CD  HCD1A-T17 |
| **SB#453/SS#78 – Amazing grace!**  **HC#248 – Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)** | TB-57 – same  SS-78  HC-248 | HTD3-T2 (4 vs.)  HCD23-T18 |
| **SB#506/HC#24 – Lord, you know that we love You** | TB-950 – same  HC-24 | No HT CD  HCD2A-T14 |
| **SB#565/HC#89/SS#43 – All I once held dear (Knowing You)** | TB-725 – same  HC-89  SS-43 | No HT CD  HCD7-T19 |
| **SB#589 – I heard a voice so gently calling** | TB-691 – I’ll follow Thee | No HT CD |
| **SB#672 – Savior, if my feet have faltered** | TB-325 – Face to face | HTD7-T6 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#376/HC#219 – King of kings, majesty** | TB-722 – same  HC-219 | No HT CD  HCD20-T19 |
| **SB#736/HC#102/SS#115 – Tell me what to do to be pure (Whiter Than the Snow)** | TB-932 – same  HC-102  SS-115 | HTD9-T19 (3 vs.)  HCD9-T12 |
| **HC#87 – Passion** | HC-87 | HCD7-T17 |
| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **SB#313/HC#159/SS#72 – Spirit of the living God** | TB-611 – Fill me anew  HC-159  SS-72 | No HT CD  HCD14-T19 |
| **HC#160/SS#125 – I Surrender** | HC-160  SS-125 | HCD14-T20 |
| **SB#595/HC#173 – In this quiet moment** | TB-186 – same  HC-173 | No HT CD  HCD16-T13 |
| **HC#205 – Closer Still** | HC-205 | HCD19-T15 |
| **HC#214 – Holy Spirit** | HC-214 | HCD20-T14 |
| **HC#236 – Lord, I Need You** | HC-236 | HCD22-T16 |
| **HC#245 – Known to You** | HC-245 | HCD23-T15 |

**Benediction:**

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

([Hebrews 13:20-21](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=hebrews+13%3a20-21), NIV)

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| **HC#309 – Go in Peace, Go in Love** | HC-309 | HCD29-T19 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#861/HC#149/SS#41 – In Christ alone** | TB-132 – same  HC-149  SS-41 | No HT CD  HCD13-T19 |
| **SB#89/HC#161/SS#48 – O for a thousand tongues to sing (My Great Redeemer’s Praise)** | TB-59 – Azmon  TB-75 – Grimsby  HC-161  SS-48 | HTD3-T4 (4 vs.)  No HT CD  HCD15-T11 |
| **HC#128 – My Tribute** | HC-128 | HCD11-T18 |
| **HC#198 – In Jesus’ Name** | HC-198 | HCD18-T18 |
| **SB#358/HC#241/SS#30 – Crown Him with many crowns** | TB-162 – Diademata  HC-241  SS-30 | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.)  HCD23-T11 |
| **SB#1031/HC#283 – Lord, if Your presence** | TB-740 – same  HC-283 | No HT CD  HCD27-T13 |
| **SB#241 – And can it be** | TB-445 – Sagina | HTD4-T13 (4 vs.) |

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| **Lent 2023 – Week #4** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Man of Sorrows**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2022 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Atonement |
| **Scripture:** | Isaiah 53:3-7 (NIV) |
| **Synopsis:** | Readers combine scripture with the song, “Man of Sorrows,” by Philip Paul Bliss (SASB #183). |
| **Characters:** | Reader 1  Reader 2  Reader 3 |
| **Props/Costumes:** | None. |
| **Setting:** | Bare stage. |
| **Running time:** | 2 minutes |

[*Readers are standing across the front of the stage.*]

**Reader 1:** The cross was the reason Jesus came to earth. It was always the plan for our redemption.

**Reader 2:** Isaiah 53:3-7 (NIV):

He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
    a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
    he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

**Reader 3:** “Man of Sorrows” by Philip Paul Bliss:

Man of sorrows! What a name

For the Son of God, who came

Ruined sinners to reclaim;

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

**Reader 1:** Jesus knew he would suffer but chose to follow God’s plan.

**Reader 2:** Surely he took up our pain  
    and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
    stricken by him, and afflicted.

**Reader 3:** Bearing shame and scoffing rude,

In my place condemned He stood,

Sealed my pardon with His blood;

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

**Reader 1:** There was no other way for us to be redeemed.

**Reader 2:** But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
    he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
    and by his wounds we are healed.

**Reader 3:** Guilty, vile and helpless we,

Spotless Lamb of God was He;

Full atonement—can it be?

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

**Reader 1:** The perfect Lamb of God was offered as a sacrifice for our sin.

**Reader 2:** We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
    each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
    the iniquity of us all.

**Reader 3:** Lifted up was He to die;

“It is finished!” was His cry;

Now in Heaven, exalted high;

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

**Reader 1:** There was no other way. This was God’s intention from the start.

**Reader 2:** He was oppressed and afflicted,  
    yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
    and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
    so he did not open his mouth.

**Reader 3:** When He comes, our glorious king,

All His ransomed Home to bring,

Then anew this song we'll sing:

“Hallelujah! What a Savior!”

**Reader 1:** Thanks be to God!

[*Blackout*]

***THE EASTER CODE***

**Children’s Moment – Week 4**

***Code Word:* Intention**

**March 19, 2023**

**by Katie Laidlaw**

**Synopsis:** The Code Word series focuses on 7 topics, from the perspective of scientists working in “The Code Lab” in order to find the secret ingredients to living out the power of the resurrection.

**Costume:** lab coat, goggles/glasses, gloves, mustache

**Set-up/Staging:** Small table or rolling cart with props.

**Props:** Pitcher filled with water, cup, a spoonful of “slush powder” in bottom of cup:[**Slush Powder**](https://www.amazon.com/Rock-Ridge-Magic-Powder-Lightnin/dp/B003FVCF2C/ref=sr_1_5?crid=JTTPSD9DT8C3&keywords=slush+powder&qid=1645128911&sprefix=slush+powder%2Caps%2C171&sr=8-5)

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| **Week 4 – Intention** |

**[*Invite children to come to the front, either having them stand or sit for the lesson.*** (I personally recommend having the children stand, as this helps keep them attentive, engaged, and involved in the lesson—especially with the dynamic of the congregation “watching them.” In this more public/formal setting, sitting provides a more relaxed/informal mindset, allowing the children to disengage and merely be present in the moment.)**]**

**Script:**

We have been working hard here in The Code Lab! We have been learning so many important things as we work through our research here in the lab. The most important part of the research process is keeping faith, even when things don’t seem promising.

Before Jesus was born, people waited many years for the Savior to come. People knew the Savior was promised. The Savior was going to come to forgive sin and give people new life! After so many years of waiting, people wondered if the Savior was ever going to come. Were people telling the truth about this promised Savior, or was it simply a nice story?

Have you ever waited a long time for something? [*Allow children to respond*]

Sometimes when we have to wait a long time for something, we create a vision, or set expectations about what we are waiting for.

Have you ever been disappointed after waiting a long time for something? [*Allow children to respond*]

When Jesus came to earth, His life was so exciting! He did so many amazing things! People were amazed by the work Jesus was doing. When Jesus was taken to be crucified, people might have been shocked or upset! Why are they taking this innocent man who has been doing so many amazing things?

But this was God’s plan all along. Jesus came to sacrifice His life so that we could have a new life, a life where our sins are forgiven, and we can make good choices to live our lives like Jesus.

Jesus dying on the cross is hard to think about. We cannot even imagine the pain Jesus endured on the cross. But this was God’s plan all along. This shows how much Jesus loves us: He took all of that pain for us, so that we could be free from sin. Jesus had to trust in God’s plan when He came to earth, and He followed through with this plan. It wasn’t easy for Jesus, but He loves us, and trusted in God’s plan for us to follow through with His sacrifice.

Is trusting in God easy? [*Allow children to respond*]

Watch this. [*Pour water into cup*] If I fill this cup with water, what do I now have? A full cup of water! What would happen if I poured this cup over your head? What would happen?

What if I told you I could pour this cup of water over one of you, but you will stay completely dry? Who trusts me? Who wants to test the impossible? [*Select a volunteer and pour the cup that has been prepared with the slush powder*]

Whoa! Look at that! You stayed completely dry! Thank you for trusting me. That wasn’t easy!

It isn’t easy to trust God, especially when we are going through things that are hard, sad, scary, or don’t make any sense. But God has a plan for us! And guess what? God has already defeated all of the bad stuff by sending us His son, Jesus.

Psalm 138:8 (NIRV) says, **“Lord, you will show that I was right to trust you. Lord, your faithful love continues forever. You have done so much for us, so don’t stop now.”**

Great work in The Code Lab today—I can’t wait to see what we learn next time!

[*Pray.*]

**Main Points:**

* God’s plan was always that Jesus would come to sacrifice His life so that we could have new life
* Jesus loves us, and trusted in God’s plan for us to follow through with His sacrifice
* It is not easy to trust in God
* God has a plan for us!
* God has already defeated all of the bad stuff by sending us His son, Jesus.

**Questions:**

* Have you ever waited a long time for something?
* Have you ever been disappointed after waiting a long time for something?
* Is trusting in God easy?

***THE EASTER CODE***

**Lenten Sermon – Week 4**

***Code Word:* Intention**

**March 19, 2023**

**By Major Peter Mount**

**TITLE: *Code Word:* Intention**

**THEME: Take Up Your Cross and Deny Yourself**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:21-27**

**INTRODUCTION**

How many of us have the best of intentions, but the best of intentions stay just that—the best of intentions with little to no action.

How many of us made New Year’s resolutions in January? And how many of us are still abiding by those resolutions? For many, if not all of us, New Year’s resolutions were more of New Year’s best intentions with little to no action or follow through.

As we look in the Bible at today’s scripture (Matthew 16:24-27) about taking up one's cross, we are going to look at it in a slightly different way than some of you have looked at it in the past.

If you have been around a church for a while, you have probably heard people say that we need to “pick up our cross every day.” As a kid when I heard this, I thought to myself “I am not strong enough or tall enough to even pick up a cross!” Maybe this is the first time you've been in church or heard the phrase “pick up your cross” and you are saying to yourself, “How can I carry a cross around all day? I have things to do; it won’t fit in my car (maybe I can just get a small one), etc.”

Let’s look at what Matthew 16 is challenging us to do.

**POINT(S)**

Before we dive into Matthew 16, let’s begin in the Old Testament in Isaiah 53:2-5, because I want us to look at the correlation between *intentions* and *action*.

**[Read Isaiah 53:2-5]**

In this passage we see the intention of God the Father. The intention that His Son Jesus would come to this Earth, bear His cross for us and take upon himself the things that we deserve—death for our sins. Jesus came to this earth—from intention to action—so that we could be forgiven and live in freedom, grace, and mercy. Are you living in that freedom, grace and mercy?

Friends, this is the gospel, that God created us to be with Him, which we find all the way back in Genesis. But then our sins messed everything up. It doesn't matter how many good things we do, we can never pay the price for what sin has done. Sin separates us from God the Creator by bringing death and evil into the world. The only payment is that of a perfect sacrifice—Jesus—who came, lived, and died on the cross, and *hallelujah!* rose again. For all those who believe this, we have life both now and for eternity. You see, the gospel is not just a few chapters, but it is the whole of the Bible from Old Testament through New Testament; Genesis to Revelation. The gospel is not just an Easter topic but a year-round everyday reality.

So, as we see Jesus taking up His cross, what does that mean for us?

Let’s take a good look at today’s scripture, Matthew 16:21-27.

In Isaiah, those good intentions turn into what we know them to be as prophecies, because the intentions foreshadow actions. Jesus came and fulfilled the words written about Him in Isaiah! If Jesus had not come and been sent by the Father, Isaiah would have just reported good intentions and not prophecies.

Jesus shares in Matthew 16:21-22 exactly what is going to happen. He is specific and intentional to share the will of His Father.

**[Read Matthew 16:21-22]**

I want to spend a few moments on Peter’s response (v. 22).

Peter “takes Him aside”! Peter, the hot-headed, not always correct, zealous disciple says (and I paraphrase): “Hey, come over here a minute, I’ve got something important I need to share with you!” This irony should not be lost on us, the pupil is about to educate the master…!

**Verse 22**: “This shall never happen to you!”

The Bible even says that Peter rebuked Jesus! A student doesn’t rebuke the master, it is disrespectful and arrogant but Jesus’ response is amazing:

**[Read verse 23]**

Jesus knew that the sin inside Peter (his inherent sin) was to blame. Peter was short-sighted and lacked understanding. We have a God who knows we are flawed and knows we need Jesus to save us. We, like Peter, can have the best intentions, but often they are mired in sin and lack of understanding God’s will and purpose for situations and experiences.

So, what does it look like for us to move from good intention, even misguided good intention, to action that is God-honoring? I believe we can find that answer in the next few verses:

**[Read verses 24-27]**

There are three steps to following through on our good intentions—to follow and live for Christ—and they are all found in verse 24 (*“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*):

1. Deny Yourself (v. 25)
2. Take up his cross (v. 26)
3. Follow Jesus (v. 27)

**Deny Yourself** **[Read verse 25]**

* We live in a world of personal satisfaction. We turn on the TV and everything is either what is wrong with you and the world, or how you can make yourself better!
* To deny yourself is to acknowledge and honor God! He is the Creator (you are not)!
* In The Salvation Army we have a saying that is not used much anymore: self-denial! Self-denial is not just something that you do during Lent but having less of you (losing your life) gives way to more of God (finding your true life). It’s a walk of holiness!

**Take up your Cross [Read verse 26]**

* We are not talking about a physical cross. We are talking about the attitude and actions of our hearts. As verse 26 reminds us, if we gain the whole world what good will it do us? It might provide some temporary satisfaction, but that is all. Some of the wealthiest people are the most unhappy and lonely people on the planet because they realize that material wealth and possessions does not bring joy. Real joy is only found in Jesus Christ. To take up one’s cross is to live and work for Christ every day, no matter the circumstances or consequences; again, it’s living a life of holiness.

**Follow Jesus [Read verse 27]**

* Following Jesus is not always “smooth sailing” because, as James shares, we will suffer trials (James 1:4). But following Jesus enables us to persevere and continue to live for Him because He promises to never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6). To follow Jesus is the most amazing, life-changing, spectacular decision we can and ever will make – both for now and the future. Not just as an intention but as a reality.

**CHALLENGES**

1. Do you know this Jesus who is life changing and sees you as you are? Have you always intended to be sold out for Him but never actually turned that into a decision? Today is your opportunity.
2. Maybe you already have that relationship with Jesus, but taking up your cross every day is hard. Sometimes the intention of doing so does not always translate into action! Let us commit today to act upon our intention and live for Christ every single day as we grow to be more and more like Him.