

I want you to think for a bit what's the most important thing in your life.

That might be things that you own, a job that you love, the people in your life.

Why are they important to you.

Are these all things that you put first in your life.

(pause)

To be a disciple of Jesus is about putting him first in your life.

Making him the most important thing.

'Then Jesus called the crowd and his disciples to him. "If any of you want to come with me," he told them, "you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me.' Mark 8.34

And that's what we'll be thinking about today - forgetting self, carrying our cross and following Jesus

(pause)

Let's pray

Loving Father we come together now to worship you.

We come now to meet with you, to be in your presence.

(pause)

We come to sing your praises,

To pray to you,

And just to sit in silent contemplation of you.

(pause)

Lord God, we approach your light.

The light that shines in the darkness of our world.

The light that searches the darkness of our hearts.

The light that banishes the shadows that surround us.

The light that causes some to turn away because they prefer the darkness.

But we lift our faces to your light and walk towards you.

Lord God, we approach your light.

(pause)

be with us as we worship Father.

Help us to think carefully about the choices we make and the people we look up to.

Lead us in the confusions and temptations of this world.

Teach us to look up to the light of your Son, Jesus Christ, for guidance and inspiration.

(pause)

In Jesus name we pray, **Amen**

Our reading today is from Mark's gospel

Mark 8.31-38

And I'm reading from the Good News translation of the Bible

Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: "The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life." 32 He made this very clear to them. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples, and rebuked Peter. "Get away from me, Satan," he said. "Your thoughts don't come from God but from human nature!" 34 Then Jesus called the crowd and his disciples to him. "If any of you want to come with me," he told them, "you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. 35 For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for me and for the gospel, you will save it. 36 Do you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life? Of course not!

37 There is nothing you can give to regain your life. 38 If you are ashamed of me and of my teaching in this godless and wicked day, then the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

A time of reflection

Jesus called the crowd to him, together with his disciples, and said to them,

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross, and let him follow me."

(pause)

No one could ever say that they were induced to follow Jesus by false pretences.

Jesus said of the person who would be his disciple, "Let them deny themselves."

We will understand the meaning of this demand best if we take it very simply and literally. "Let them say no to themselves."

If someone will follow Jesus Christ they must ever say no to themselves and yes to Christ.

(pause)

Jesus isn't saying to the people they have to go with him.

He isn't saying to us we have to follow Him.

We have a choice.

He is saying to the crowds and his disciples.

If you want to come with me this is what you have got to do.

You must forget yourself and carry your cross

(pause)

Being a disciple of Jesus costs everything.

Jesus told the rich man sell all his possessions and come follow him when he asked Jesus what he should do to get eternal life.

The cost was too great for that man as he had many possessions.

Is the cost of being a disciple too great for us?

Does it cost us too much to make the choice to follow Jesus?

(pause)

Do you want to go on a journey with him in your life?

Or do you want to go your own way

And do your own thing?

"If any of you want to come with me," he told them, "you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me.

(pause)

We know what we have to do if we are going to go with him.

Forget self.

Make him the most important thing in our life.

Serving him,

Doing what he wants.

Being focused on that,

Not focused on our own lives,

Our own needs,

Not being self-obsessed but Jesus obsessed.

Not taking selfies.

Looking inwards.

But seeing the world as Jesus sees it.

Looking outwards.

Seeing the need in the world and trying to help as Jesus did.

Caring for others more than we care for ourselves.

Loving others as Jesus loved others.

Serving others as Jesus served his disciples.
Putting other people's needs before our own.

As Jesus did when he died on the cross

(pause)

carry your cross

That means the same as forget self.

Die to self.

The cross is a means of execution.

A place that you die.

So Jesus is saying come with me and die as I die.

I did God's will,

I put God's choices first and died on the cross.

You do the same.

Put me first.

Put my will and desires first.

Die to self.

(pause)

We know what it will cost us to follow Jesus.

Can we do it?

Do we want to do it?

Are we going to do it?

(pause)

Lets pray

Father we want to choose to follow Jesus but it's hard.

We want to forget self and put Jesus first in our lives but so many things get in the way.

We have responsibilities to other people.

We have jobs to do,
Things that we need to pay for.

We need to be able to put food on the table.

We have people to look after.

(pause)

It's scary following Jesus.

The thought of putting Jesus first.

Of dying to self,

Putting Jesus needs and desires before our own.

(pause)

Help us Father to choose to follow the path that leads to Jesus.

Help us Father to take up our cross and follow
Jesus.

(pause)

Father, Jesus gave his life for us.

May we give our lives to Jesus

Knowing that in following him,

In giving all for him,

We find true freedom

Amen