

St. Matthew AME Church
Lent Bible Study
Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2010

St. Matthew 16:21-24

- I. Ash Wednesday
 - A. What is Ash Wednesday – reminder that we came from ashes or dust and that God loved us so much that He gave His only son to save us.
 1. This ash and dust is precious to God- so precious that He sacrificed the best that He had for us
 2. Beginning of Lent – Lent is a time of penitence and renewal, when we seek to renew and draw closer in relationship to God through Jesus Christ
 - a. 40 days leading to Easter, not counting Sundays

- II. Many make Lent a time when we sacrifice or give up something.
 - A. Why do we do it?
 1. Many do it for the wrong reason. Some to lose weight, others because of tradition (it is something we heard we are suppose to do)
 2. We should make the sacrifice because it is a reminder of what God through Jesus Christ gave up for us and because it is necessary in order for us to accept the call of Christ to follow Him.
 - B. This is what Jesus was teaching His disciples in the text. If anybody wants to follow Jesus they must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him.

- III. A great flaw or deficiency exists in the Christian Church today. It is a fatal defect. The flaw is a lack of true discipleship.
 - A. Genuine Christian Discipleship means forsaking everything to follow Christ. While there is much done in His name, there is very little of following Christ.
 - B. This is because so few are willing to deny self, bear our cross or follow Him.
 1. Do we want victory? Yes. Do we want denial? No.
 2. Do we want prosperity? Yes. Do we want sacrifice? No.
 3. Do we want convenience? Yes. Do we want inconvenience? No.
 4. Do we want the crown? Yes. Do we want the cross? No.
 5. Do we want to follow Christ? We say we do.
 6. Are we following Christ? We say we are.

- IV. If we are the we are:
 - A. Denying ourselves
 1. When we think about what it means to deny ourselves we are brought to the radical distinction between a God oriented life and a life of unrepentant self-seeking.
 2. Self-seeking is the opposite of self-denial. It has been the essence of sin from the beginning of creation.
 - a. Satan- I want my way – I will displace God – God’s reply was that Satan would be brought low (Isaiah 14:12-15)
 - b. Christ – I will go down in self-denial- those who I love will be raised from sin to glory- in response God exalted Him
 - c. Crucifying the flesh- selfish desires that oppose the will of God

- B. Take up our cross
 - 1. Many view physical sickness, ailments, failed marriages, debt, other troubles as crosses – these are burdens, not crosses
 - 2. Crosses are what Jesus refers to in Matthew 25th chapter
Forgiving, studying the Word, Praying, visiting the sick, those in prison, etc.....
 - 3. Taking up our cross is a matter of the will – must deny self first, so that our will is conformed to the will of God
 - 4. It involves saying yes to something difficult for Jesus sake – denying myself time, money, convenience
 - 5. Witnessing – putting ourselves out for the sake of others

- C. Follow Jesus – path to be followed to the end, lifetime journey
 - 1. God's Word- "lamp unto our feet", "light on our path" (Psalm 119:105)
 - 2. God's Will – discovered through study of Word, prayer, leading of Holy Spirit