

To Know and Follow Jesus
Matthew 16:13-25
Dr. Dan Doriani

And if you would, please continue to remain standing as they read God's Word to you. From Matthew Chapter 16 for your visitor today. We're so glad you're here. You are walking into a series called Scenes in the Life of Christ. This is Matthew 16. Will have a little bit more than was advertised in the Bulletin. I'm going to read just a little bit farther. If you are the kind of person who likes to follow in the Bible you might want to get your finger ready for Luke 17 in about 5 minutes as well. But first, let's listen to God's Word, beginning in Matthew chapter 16, verse 13 and following.

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^[a] I will build my church, and the gates of hell^[b] shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[c] in heaven." ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord!^[d] This shall never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^[e] to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Please be seated.

Now, if you'd like to follow along, I want you to know that I am a good Presbyterian and therefore I have a five-point sermon and the first two are connected pretty closely.

We will see first that many people think of Jesus as a prophet then and now. But God's revelation is that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And that confession made rightly, is the foundation of the church which Jesus builds. We have a part in that, and we especially have a part in that as we are willing to suffer with the Lord. Let me say it all a slightly different way, because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We should follow Him joyfully, even if it's costly.

Well, the book of Ecclesiastes tells us something we quote in our culture and that is -- there's a time for everything. There is a time to celebrate graduation and there's a time to weep graduation. Because, you know, we're glad to graduate but we're sorry to say goodbye to our friends were we're glad to send students off and we're sad to see our favorite students go.

There's a time to be with the crowd, a time to cheer with the multitudes over football, soccer, basketball, baseball, whatever you love, there's a time to cheer with the crowd. There's also time to withdraw from the crowd to be alone. Maybe by yourself, maybe with a group of people. And that's what happens in this passage.

Jesus withdraws from the crowds. Many people have gathered around him for months and months, and now he says, Let's go aside. He goes with them to a place called Caesarea Philippi. Not many people live there, far at the extreme north of Israel, kind of like going to northern Maine or northern Idaho. It's far away and they have a conversation there. Now. Jesus is a teacher and a preacher. He can preach to thousands of people. He's very good at it, but he doesn't preach and teach all the time. Sometimes, in fact, often he asks questions. And while he reveals himself to his disciples publicly in a big discourse, he also reveals himself through questions. Because, as one person said, Jesus is not preparing reporters. He is preparing witnesses. That is to say, a reporter can say, well, the boss said or the president said X, Y and Z, but a witness owns it and can say it in his or her own words in any setting. And that comes when you wrestle. And Jesus wants his disciples to wrestle with the question, Who am I? Now? He begins with a question about what people say. Who do people say the son of man is? And they said all kinds of things. Some people said he was evil. He was leading Israel astray. Some people could make so little sense of his life. Even his own brother said he may be out of his mind. He's so different from the rest of our family. Most people, the great majority then and now, believe that Jesus is a great man, a great teacher, a wise man, a sage, someone with a beautiful life and beautiful counsel.

And so we hear people generally say, Jesus, you are John the Baptist or Jeremiah one of the other prophets. Elijah, you're a great teacher. That's the common answer to this day. If you ask a Buddhist or a Hindu or even an atheist what they think of Jesus, the chances are very good that they will say we should listen to his counsel. Now. Most people would be flattered to hear that people think you're a prophet and Jesus is not flattered. He hears the word you are a prophet. And he says, Well, yes, I know that that's what people say about me, but let's pursue that a little bit. In fact, all four gospels teach us that this is an inadequate answer.

I told you, you might want to keep your Bible open to Luke 17. In Luke Chapter 17 beginning in verse 11, Jesus is walking on his way to Jerusalem, passing through Samaria. That's about a three-day walk. And as he's walking, some people see him and they know who he is. They recognize him. He's the teacher, he's the healer. And so some men see him. In fact, it's ten lepers, verse 12, as he is entering a village. And they lift up their voices and say, Jesus, master, have mercy on us. They cry out together. And Jesus says to them, Go show yourselves to the priests, meaning go for a walk to Jerusalem. Now you would do that if you were cleansed and restored to society. But Jesus doesn't cleanse them or heal. Let me just say go. And as they're going, as they're walking to Jerusalem, they all realize that they've been healed. And nine of the ten continue to go to Jerusalem. We're healed. We can go back to family, friends, society, to our old homes. And one came back and this is what it says about the one who came back in verse 15.

One came back and began praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus feet, giving thanks. He was a Samaritan, and Jesus answered, We're not ten cleansed. Where are the other nine? Now I want you to envision this for a second. Of course, I'm not going to bring anybody up here to envision this because it would be insanely awkward and ill fitting.

But imagine, if you would, that someone, for whatever reason you're watching someone do something great and someone falls at their feet and begins to praise God. If any human being had another human being, any ordinary man, mere man, mere woman had somebody falling at their feet praising God, we would say, Get up, get up, get up. We would be horrified that someone was praising God at our feet.

But when a man is praising God at Jesus feet, he does not say, Get up. He says, Where are the others now? When you're comfortable, when Jesus is comfortable with people praising God at his feet and asking where the other worshipers are, this is a powerful indication that he knows that he is God and only God will receive worship.

And there are various other signs throughout the Gospels that Jesus acts like a man who knows exactly who he is. He's the Son of God He forgives since he tells people they need to love him more than father, mother, sister, brother, children. He says, I know your hearts. These are all things that God alone knows. So Jesus has to press with his disciples and asked them the question.

When I know that the crowd say that you are a prophet, I know that that's what they report. That's an accurate report. But who do you say that I am? Who do you say that? I will get that in a minute. I just want to make sure we label that this is an important issue in our culture today.

It may be an issue that's important for you personally because you're not quite sure what Jesus is. It's important for you if you are interested in sharing your faith with other people. There are various views and some people say, well, Jesus is a prophet, He's a wise man and Jesus wants to take that option away, and I want to take that option away.

The option that Jesus is simply a wise man, because if he claimed to be God, sometimes in words, very often in deeds, if he claimed to be God and he isn't either he claims it sincerely or sincerely. And if his sister claims to be God and he isn't, then he's crazy, right? Because anyone who thinks he's God and isn't is a madman.

And whatever else you do is tied together from the Gospels. You really can't come away with a conclusion that Jesus is crazy. He's the most sane person we ever met as we read the gospel story. So he's not a lunatic. Well, then the second option is that he claimed to be God and knew that he wasn't, in which case he's a liar. And not only did he lie if that's the case, but he also sent all of his friends to their deaths for a lie, which would make him a monster. Now, whatever else you think, whatever else an unbeliever thinks, and if you're an unbeliever, we're glad you're here today. Whatever you might think about Jesus, very, very, very few people have thought Jesus was a monster or a liar who betrayed his own friends.

So he's not a liar. He's not a lunatic. Maybe. Maybe it's all a fabrication. That's what some people say. They say, you know, the gospel stories are made up long after the events by the church. You probably heard this. It's in movies and TV shows and skeptical program that you encounter here and there. The early church consolidated a story and cut away all the other accounts of Jesus so they could have power and control over the mighty apparatus of the church.

The difficulty with that is the church was very weak and prone to persecution and poverty and nothing attractive in society for hundreds of years. So why would anybody make up a legend and then die for it after a life of poverty and oppression? So the idea that it's a legend the church made up makes no sense either. So we're left.

We're left with one good option, and that is that Jesus is indeed Lord, and it's really the most logical option. But people want to be the captain of their own ship and live their life the way they want to live. And so they resist it because people resist. We have to dig into the question who is Jesus and what does it mean?

Now Jesus digs into it by asking the disciples forcefully, okay, the people say you're a prophet, but what about you? And in the original languages is as emphatic as it can be. What about you? Who do you say that I am? Peter says you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now, that's a robust answer and it's an answer.

Jesus says that God himself, the Father gave to Him flesh and blood did not reveal. The truth is not your idea. This came to you from God. You are the Christ. Meaning. I know most of you know this very well. The Christ means the Anointed one. Someone who's anointed and appointed to fulfill certain tasks. And those main tasks in the Bible are to be a prophet, to speak for God, to be a priest, to offer sacrifices for God, and to be a king, to lead God's people.

Those are the people who were anointed most of all. So you are the Christ. You're one who's been anointed to teach, to offer sacrifices and to lead. That's a great answer, but that's part one

of the answer. Part two is you are the Christ the Son by faith, we can all be sons and daughters of God. There are many sons and daughters of God, but Jesus is the Son.

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And again, Jesus says, Absolutely, the father revealed this to you. Now I want to just take a sidebar and talk about our society today. In our society, we tend to think that we can find the truth by looking within three centuries ago almost a man named John Jack Russo started telling people that the truth is found.

When you look within, you want to know the truth, look inside, and that view is dominant in our society, at least in educated circles, for about 100 years now. And so people have these moments of truth in movies. My wife and I kind of mocked them by now. You can tell when there's a movie, when the character like a dramatic movie with character development and the character has to decide if he's going to, you know, go into ballet or go into engineering or if he's going to be a fighter pilot or make pottery.

And the big decision is there in front of him and what are we to do? And you just wait for it. Some, as you say, around this time, it's a moment of truth. Some, as you say, you know, you've got to follow your heart. I made a list of the major movies that came out once I stopped at 74, movies that had at a crucial moment the line. You got to follow your heart.

Now, I understand that, but the Bible says actually following your heart is a little bit dangerous because your heart is deceitful and deceptive. Whom we fool ourselves and we don't see things as they are, and we need information from the outside. And the best information the outside, of course, is information from God.

Let me illustrate this very personally. What happens when you look within. So this week, just a few days ago, my hose caddy broke. Anybody here know what a hose caddy is? That's the thing you wrap up your hose so it doesn't lie all over your driveway and you run over the nozzle and crush it five times a year.

So I said, okay, I'm going to get a hose carrying out a hose caddy. And I don't know what went wrong. Maybe I got a cheap hose in over the winter, just got hard and it couldn't work anymore. Maybe I just don't know how to wrap up hoses. I don't know. But this year, when we hooked up our hose, I mean, it just wouldn't work. It was just this massive tangle, and I couldn't get it to work. And I'm pulling and tugging. In the end, it just took a dive to it. I understood that that was the end of the hose. I understood that and I had to thoughts looking with it. I thought American manufacturing just isn't what it used to be. no, no, no. Maybe it's American importers aren't what they used to be. And so I'm I'm angry at manufacturers and importers. And I thought it's probably not the man, it's me. I'm just defective. I can't figure out how to roll up a hose and unroll it again. I'm such an idiot. And when you look inside, you go from one mistake to another.

You're too happy with yourself. One minute you're too angry at yourself, another minute the truth about hose caddies is not going to come by looking inside. And the truth about what I should do with my life is not going to come by looking inside. The truth comes when we go to

the source of truth, which is the Bible, which is why we study the word in so many ways for so many years in this church.

So what does the Bible say to us? The Bible says that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Now, it's great to say that. Great to hear it. We also know that Jesus says the father revealed this to you. And today, if anyone is truly taking the Word of God, they have to respond with their hearts and God has to give you an impetus, a desire. The spirit has to move. The father has to move in your life. Let me illustrate it this way. One of my little ones at the age of two, loved to sing, loved music already. And in our family we're reasonably musical and we sing parts from time to time just for fun. And sometimes we sing the doxology before meals. We hit all four parts there, you know, altos and basses and tenors and sopranos. And it sounded good. It's a beautiful piece of music to sing parts for. And in our little ones, eyes got big. She had never heard parts before. To her knowledge. She was so excited. She heard the words and then we finished. She said, Praise God again, meaning Sing that again. Let's sing that some more. And we sang it a couple more times. Now that's the beginning of the planting of the Word of God in her little heart. And, you know, we do throughout our life. We teach Bible stories and we help them memorize Bible verses and we tell them about Jesus and that early praise God, but she didn't really understand can become full blown faith as we study, as we inculcate, as we try to live a faithful life and the Holy Spirit has to work too. And we have to respond to the father's nudging. It's not a matter of simply being educated. It is a spiritual matter because we all want to be lord of our own life. And Jesus says, No, I'm Lord. And so we need to be humble and we need to learn somehow that the truth and the strength does not lie within us, but it does lie with God.

The Father taught you this. Now Jesus rightly confessed, is the foundation of the church. The passage goes on to say, I tell you are Peter. And on this Rocca will build my church. Now there's a play on words here. The play on words goes like this. I tell you Peter , on this rock I will build my church.

So he's not saying I build my church on you. I build my church on this rock and on you, Peter, I will build my church. And the reason for that is that Peter's too unstable. You know that at the arrest of Jesus, he pulled out a sword and tried to chop people. Not the best move. Later he denied Jesus three times. Definitely not the right path. Later, on another occasion, he separated from as a Jewish believer, separated from Gentile believers because he felt some pressure coming from the outside. Definitely not the right thing. So Peter himself cannot be the foundation of churches --too unstable. So what does it mean then, when Jesus says, I tell you are Peter and on this rock.

So you know the word rock is a word like there are rocks and there's also a name, The Rock. Dwayne Johnson is the rock and various people have names like Rocky Balboa, who was the boxer some years ago and then, of course, is Rocky and Bullwinkle. If you haven't watched Rocky Balboa, you should really give it a try. It's got some really good jabs about communism in there. It's not Rocky and Bullwinkle. Rocky is a squirrel. It's the Rocky on this rock. Now, in what sense can Peter be the rock, given that he's a flawed man? And the answer is he can be the rock

and he is the rock when he is rightly confessing Christ. So a little bit later, Peter says something wrong. We'll get to that in a moment. And Jesus calls him a stumbling stone. But for now, in his role, his God appointed role is an eye and ear witness of the Ministry of Christ. He was called to be with Christ. They walk together. Whatever else the disciples did wrong, the disciples stay but Jesus. Listen to Jesus. And later on, Peter, despite all his flaws, became a a foundational, foundational witness to the foundational Jesus. Peter became a foundational witness to the person work of Christ. We see that in Acts two, three and four, where Peter proclaims Christ truly as the one appointed by God to die and to rise again. But when Peter says the wrong thing, then he is not the rock. It all depends on what he's saying specifically. I say more about this in a couple of minutes, specifically when Jesus says Thank you.

It's right that I am the crisis son of living God and I must go to the cross. Peter says, No way. Absolutely not. And when Peter says No way, you can't go to the cross, then he is no longer a rock. He is a stumbling stone. More about that in a moment. It's a hard idea. The crucifixion is a very hard idea.

It takes time to receive new ideas. So Peter pulls Jesus aside and says, Not just no way, never. This will never happen to you. But the words he uses basically mean Make God forgive you for saying such a thing. May God have mercy on me. That's what it literally says. May God have mercy on you. That is to say, may God have forgiving mercy on you for daring to say that the Messiah would die because He couldn't imagine that so becomes a stumbling stone, not a rock on which you build the foundation.

Jesus is the rock. And then. And then Peter's a rock. And then when we declare the gospel and all of you share the faith or teach or make disciples or spend time with your friends, encourage them. You're you're at least small rocks building on the foundation of Christ and the apostles and everyone who's followed. Since then. We're a rock.

We can also be a stumbling stone as well. How can that be? Well, Jesus says Peter's a stumbling stone because he's redefining. He wants to remake or deny the gospel in some small way. He thinks Jesus is making mistake. He thinks Jesus shouldn't go to the cross, and then he's a stumbling stone. You know about stumbling stones? Yes.

Whenever I fly into Birmingham, I'm always marveling at how many beautiful trees there are. You know, you live in a city with fantastic trees. You know that right now I grew up in western Pennsylvania where they had lots of trees. So it makes me feel good to see all the beautiful trees. And I also know that we have beautiful trees. You have lots of water, which means there's beautiful places to hike. And we hike and we're walking around and we're looking at the birds and we see a hawk and we see a blue bird and we see a yellow bellied sap sucker. We all look at the birds. And then and then on the on the trail, we trip over a rock, don't we? Sometimes we trip over a root. We fall over or almost fall over. That's what that's what Jesus is saying to Peter. You are a stumbling stone to me. You are the kind of stone that people fall over when you say

the wrong thing, when you say the right thing, when you testify to me, then you're building on the foundation.

And when you say the right thing and believe it, you are building on you're building the church. Now, there's no stopping it. Jesus says on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Now, I've heard it taught. Maybe you have to, but this means the church will never fail. And that's true. The church will never fail. And when we see the church shrinking in places like Norway and Germany and England and Scotland, maybe America, we can begin to have sad thoughts. But please remember that the church is growing by leaps and bounds in Asia, in Africa, in South America. There's never been more Christians than there are today, percentage wise or absolutely, the church is growing, just as Jesus said, and the gates of hell, that is to say, the defenses of hell--Gates are defensive weapons. The defenses of hell will not be able to thwart the advance of the gospel. Again, that doesn't mean that it's always easy every time you talk about the gospel. I'm not saying that you may be in a conversation with somebody about what the Bible has to say about marriage and family and sex ethics, and you quickly pick up the sense that they don't want to hear what you have to say. And you may at the moment say, okay, I'm going to stop talking about this. And by God's grace, maybe the light of my life will shine because it's hard to argue with someone when they've been married for 20 years or 60 years or 8 years or 13 years or 37 years, and they're manifestly happy. And then somebody says, you know, you look so happy.

You've had a carefree life and you laugh. I've had a carefree life, really. I don't know where you get that impression. We've had some really rough times. We, by God's grace, made our way through them. And then, you know, you look at each other and you give each other your husband, wife, look at each other, and you give each other a smile or a hug that nobody can refute. There's no word that says, no, you're not happy. So sometimes people don't want to hear our words, but maybe they hear our lives. We always use words. If we can, but our life speaks if we're open and candid and don't present the idea that we're perfect, but present the idea that God has carried us through, that's what we do now.

Jesus goes on to say to people who lead the church to Peter first and others, I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever you bind on Earth will be bound and whatever you lose on Earth will be loosed. People debate exactly what this means, but the meaning is actually pretty easy. Keys open and close doors. If you loose, that means open. You open the door. The right proclamation of Jesus Christ opens the door to eternal life, to heaven, to the church. And when someone proclaims the word and somebody says, I want no part of it, you say, well, then the kingdom is closed to you. Because the only way to be right with God is by faith in Jesus.

Now, it takes a little work here. You know that this church has sponsored from very near the beginning that are to wonderful, long serving pastors. Both had major roles at Birmingham Theological Seminary right here. Ike Reeder is the leader now, and you may or may not know that this seminary has a substantial presence in prisons. There are not one or two, but a number

of incarcerated prisoners who are earning theological degrees. You know, I because the key has been turned and we say to criminals, whatever you've done, violent crime, petty crime, white collar crime, defrauding people, striking people, you can be forgiven by the work of Christ believed. And then if you encounter somebody else's deeply moral and they're they've got a great life and they're just so proud of their righteous life.

And you say, Hey, have you ever struggled? Never. Have you ever told a lie? Never. And they're just the most moral person. And they say, I don't see the need, my need for Jesus. You have to say to them as nicely as you can or as boldly as you need. You're not going to get into heaven on the basis your good works.

There's only one way in and your opinion of yourself, your high moral opinion of yourself doesn't match God's opinion because he knows. He knows. So we close the gate to that person. Now, that's not something we do ourselves. We're only really clearing what God declared in His word. We're only stating again what's stated so clearly by Jesus and the Apostles. But we do restate it. And then if we follow Jesus, we follow Him not just in saying yes to his words, but in saying yes to his way of life. Again, Peter said, No way you're going to the cross. And Jesus said, Actually way I am going to the cross. He said, In fact, if you want to follow me, it's not enough to say yes to my words. I'm quoting now versus 24 and 25. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And when you lose your life, then you find it. Now, one challenge for us here is that the cross has been domesticated a little bit. So there are a number of crosses here in this worship space. In this space right here, I think there's only one. But we have other crosses on our grounds and then probably a number of people I do not say this to criticize anyone at all, but probably a number of you have a cross on your person. Maybe you have a necklace with a cross in you, or maybe an earring or some other jewelry with a cross.

And that's to help you remind yourself of the fact that you're a follower of Jesus and his life is beautiful. And so there the crosses are beautiful. Here's here's a wooden cross and it's polished. And the the beauty of the jewelry and the polished wood obscures for us the fact that when Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me, it was horrifying. The cross was rough hewn wood, no polish, no jewelry, just a couple of chunks of wood lashed together, minimal fanfare. It's just where someone is going to die as a shocking statement. And yet we live that life.

So if I go back to our prisoners in one of the prisons, there is a man whose name is Russell. Ike Reeder told me all about it. I'm trying to get the story as well as I can. I guess the president of the seminary, he said. Russell grew up as a Christian, lost his way, renounced the faith community, an extreme crime in jail for a long time, heard the gospel believe the Gospel committed his life to Christ, started gathering people. Now the pods, they call them pods, have 110 people in Russell's pod. There were 15 believers in the other 95 weren't so happy about having a body of believers, and the hostility was sharp enough that they thought they might, you know, suffer violence. And so they started to sleep in watches. Not everybody would sleep, watch each other's back.

And then more and more people became Christians. Eventually, 110 men took over an entire pod, 110 Christians, all disciples in prison, some of them studying theology. Russell, the leader of the group or a leader of the group. Russell got an MDiv, which is a three year seminary degree. Then he got a DMin another couple of years, and now he's working on a PhD. all behind bars, which is pretty awesome. But he's not just doing that. He's also teaching and he's also reading the Bible for the sake of people who are blind. And he's mentoring people and he's been such a good prisoner that he's earned enough points to get early release and he's not taking it so he can stay and mentor the other men in prison for a little bit longer. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine saying, I think I'll stay in prison for the sake of the people I'm minister to? That's taking up your cross.

Now, you may say, well, that's not what the cross means. So a very helpful word comes from a man named Jerome who lived in the fourth century. And he said when we when we talk about the cross of Christ and martyrdom, we have to distinguish between two kinds of martyrs, a martyr, someone who gives up their life as a witness. He said there's two kinds of martyrs as red martyrs and white martyrs. A red martyr gives his life blood for Christ. And sadly, there are many white martyrs in the world today. Number one, according to the sources, is Nigeria, because there are lots of Muslims and Christians growing a lot of tension and the Muslims are killing Christians a lot. Christians also are put to death in places like Iraq and Iran. Those are red martyrs. But Jerome said and many people said it since then, there's also a white martyr, a white martyr, someone who doesn't shed their blood, but they give their life sometimes painfully for Christ. If you're a disciple, then that may be God's call upon your life. And it can be big and it can be small.

Now, let me just move over to something from contemporary culture for a moment. Do you know, can I just ask you to hold up your hands? How many know what Antinatalism is? Antinatalism? Nobody. One person. All right, let it go. Let's talk after church just so we can feel good about each other. Okay? All right. If he agrees to it.

Antinatalism is a movement that says let's completely stop having children. Let humanity stop having children. And if you can't get the whole human race to do it, at least you should do it. You should do it. Why? Because humans put out so much CO2 and other global warming results of economic activity that we're killing the planet, we're killing the animals, and we're wiping out species. So no more. No more babies. Save the planet. That's one argument.

Argument number two is why bring children in world with so much suffering, so much sorrow, depression, anxiety? Why would you bring anybody into this veil of suffering?

Argument number three, which I think probably is the most common one, is I don't want to go through it all. I don't want to change diapers and wipe snotty noses and wrestle with car seats, moving them from one car to another. It's miserable business, sleepless nights, piano lessons, bassoon lessons, soccer lessons. Just don't want to do it. Now what they're missing and I know I've said this before, what they're missing is that all the great things in life are hard. All the great

things in life are hard. Training for your career. It's hard, but it's great being a parent, being married. It's hard. But it's great that, you know, I hadn't had the opportunity to verify this. But did you know that during 911, when the Jets were first scrambling, when they didn't know how many Jets were going to smash, where that to get some planes up really fast because there was danger of the White House and so forth being attacked with these planes. They didn't have time to put the armaments on the planes of the first people up. All they had was rubber bullets, no sidewinders, no machine gun bullets. And so if there was a plane, it was going to go into the White House or Congress or whatever those jets had to ram. That is to say, collide with and destroy that jet and die in the process. And they did it. They went up for the sake of their country and the glory in that.

And Jesus says, I want you to be willing to do that for me, not just for my country, your country, not just for children. I want you to be able to be willing to give up your life. And this is why we have so much strife in our society.

You know, people are nobody wants to sacrifice. Everybody wants to demand their rights. I demand the right to carry an air 15 to the mall. And somebody says, well, I demand that you not carry it to the mall. And then there's a fight. And then somebody else says, Well, I demand transgender care. And somebody says, I demand that you not have transgender care.

And then and then we're fighting. And the more people demand their way, the more they fight. And Jesus says, the way to live is to give up your life for others. And I model this for you. I give up my life and you give up your life. And the fighting kind of calms down when we put each other first, doesn't it?

I think it does. So Jesus gave his life for us and then gave us a pattern. It's not an easy pattern. He says. I died for you. You can have life in and through me by faith and then follow me. And it's hard. But it's great because most things in life that are great are hard. And Jesus is kind enough to tell us that more than that, He's good enough to give himself when we fail and to cover us when we would like to sacrifice. But we don't and we demand our way. So he loves us and cares for us, equips us and empowers us and sends us out in his name.

Let's pray together.

Father, I do pray that we would hear that you are the crisis, son, a living God, and believe it, you would hear it and believe it. And live like we believe it.

Lord, we know we fall short. That's why, Father, you had to send your son. Because we'll never heed all of your instructions. But we do love your instructions. We do love your word. And we do ask for your spirit to empower us to live a life in which we take up a cross and follow and live for others, whether red or white. Give us your spirit. We pray more and more to enable us to lay aside our sins and desires and to live for you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.