

The Way of Jesus

The Way of the Cross

Matthew 16:21–28

Big Idea

You cannot confess Jesus as the Christ while refusing the way of the cross.

The way of Jesus is the way of the cross, but the cross is not the end of the story.

1. Peter Has the Right Title, but the Wrong Imagination

Matthew 16:21–23

Peter has just confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. But when Jesus begins to show that he must suffer, be killed, and be raised, Peter rebukes him.

Peter wants Jesus to be Messiah without suffering, Christ without cross, victory without death, and glory without sacrifice.

Jesus tells Peter:

“Get behind me, Satan!”

Peter is out of position. Disciples do not stand in front of Jesus and correct his direction. Disciples get behind Jesus and follow.

Key line: Peter has the right confession, but the wrong imagination.

2. The Way of Jesus Is the Way of the Cross

Matthew 16:24

Jesus says:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

This call is for anyone who follows Jesus.

Deny yourself does not mean hate yourself. It means surrendering self-rule. Jesus is not saying we are worthless; he is calling us to stop living as though we are lord of our own lives.

Take up your cross does not mean ordinary inconvenience. The cross is the cost of following Jesus in faithfulness, love, truth, obedience, and surrender.

Key line: Jesus never calls us to a road he refuses to walk.

3. The Life We Clutch Is the Life We Lose

Matthew 16:25–26

Jesus says:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

The life we try to protect from Jesus is the very life we lose. When comfort, approval, money, politics, family, or self becomes lord, we lose life.

But the life surrendered to Jesus is the life that is found.

Jesus then asks:

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”

Key line: The most dangerous bargain is the one where you get what you wanted and lose yourself in the process.

4. The Cross Is Not the End of the Story

Matthew 16:27–28

The cross is real, but it is not the end.

Jesus says the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father and repay each person according to what he has done.

What looks like loss for Jesus now will not look like loss when the Son of Man comes in glory.

The Transfiguration, which comes next in Matthew, gives Peter, James, and John a glimpse of kingdom glory before they continue walking toward the cross.

Key line: The cross is not the end of the story.

Closing Summary

As *The Way of Jesus* series ends, this passage brings us to a decision point.

We have seen the way of Jesus.

Now we have to decide whether we will follow.

Not merely admire.

Not merely respect.

Not simply attend.

Follow.

The path is the way of Jesus.

And the way of Jesus is the way of the cross.

But the cross is not the end of the story.