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The the reading today is out of Matthew chapter 16 verses 24 to 27 As soon as I pull it up Then Jesus told his disciples if anyone would come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me For whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it For what will the prophet man if he gains the whole world and forth with his soul and what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the son of man is going to come with his angels and the glory of his father and then he will repay each person According to what he has done [silence] Thank you, Aaron. Good morning. Aaron and I are playing tag team. He he runs the audio for me. I run it for him. So we're switching back and forth here That verse that Aaron just read from Matthew 16 Leading up to that is an incredible series of events So Jesus is out walking with his disciples and he's been teaching for a while and he's been doing miracles and stuff like that and so he begins kind of probing his disciples and says You know who do people say I am and They start giving him some ideas and he's like who do you say I am and and that is the first time that the disciples Admit or recognize that he is the Christ. He is the Messiah and because It is the heavenly Father who has revealed this truth to them Jesus now understands that they are ready to understand the big picture and so he begins to then explain to them about how his mission is actually to go and die and for the sins of mankind and be raised again and and then that's when Peter rebukes Jesus and then Jesus rebukes Peter and Then we get to that verses that Aaron just read if anyone desires to come after me Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it It is in this passage that Jesus first reveals his destiny and now today is Palm Sunday and It is the day that we remember what is known as the triumphal entry when Jesus returned to Jerusalem to fulfill that destiny And at the end of that week which we refer to as passion week is the culmination of God's plan the death and Resurrection of his son on the cross to be the propitiation for our sins Well when the Lord first arrived in town People rejoiced they They threw their blankets down in the street. They threw palm branches down in the street. They waved palm branches shouted Hosanna and They were doing all this because they thought that The warrior king had arrived to liberate them from the oppression of the Roman Empire To drive out the foreign invaders you see the Empire of Rome had expanded to the point where it had now taken over Taken over the land that God had given them and and this man the Caesar who called himself a God had established his government in this nation where God himself was supposed to be the only government and so they felt trampled on and so They didn't shout it, but they very much spoke it in their hearts. They were they were saying Hosanna now get rid of the Romans That's what they thought he was here for But you see Jesus had not come to deal with their external problem, which was the Romans He had come to deal with their internal problem, which is sin, which is everyone's internal problem The Jewish sacrifices may have had a limited power to atone for sins But they were also a foreshadowing of the perfect once and for all sacrifice That would not only completely Obliterate their sins and the need for animal sacrifices But it would allow them to be filled with the Holy Spirit that same Holy Spirit power that had only just touched the prophets throughout history would now come and dwell with inside every believer a Lot happened during Passion Week It began with so many people following him and it ended with so many shouting crucify him And even his own disciples were scattered at that moment to fulfill what had been prophesied in Zechariah Even though he told them many times what was going to happen they were still scattered because they didn't understand but now we can look back across time and see the happy ending see the whole picture and the Lord still calls to each one of us follow me and this morning we're going to look at the events of Palm Sunday and Passion Week and we are going to observe the life of one who calls us to follow him and We're going to see where he goes and see what he does and we're going to learn from that how to follow him To begin with we must follow him into purification and dedication Mark 11 the 15 through 17 says so they came to Jerusalem Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple and Overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves and he would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple Then he taught saying to them It is it not written my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations But you have made it a den of thieves So the very first thing that Jesus does when he arrives in town is he clears out the temple God was about to spend a week teaching in a temple dedicated to him and What did he find when he got there? greedy thieves and evil men taking advantage of those trying to get to him and So of course he had no hesitation. He knocked over their stuff He drove them out and he wouldn't even let them carry the wares through the temple Well, what do we learn from this? Well, there's the obvious stuff about not turning church into a business About not extorting those who were trying to access the free gift of God But there's a more important lesson to be learned here First Corinthians 6 19 says that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit For the Jews their holy place where the presence of God could be found was a building called the temple but today we are the holy place where the presence of God can be found and So how do we clean out our temple? The word is repent John the Baptist and Jesus both started their ministry with that simple message repent Literally, it means to change your mind. It means turning from a Life and a mind and a heart set on darkness to one of light You were once carnal and fleshly and Sinful and selfish and God tells us to repent to change your mind and to change the direction of your heart salvation starts when we repent but Repentance is also something that we continually do so long as we have our fallen bodies Now once you die and go to heaven or possibly get raptured We will receive a body that is free from the curse of the sinful flesh And that would be wonderful But until that day we must keep repenting We must keep turning away from the old self and keep turning towards the new self that God places within us and We must be careful little eyes what we see and be careful. Well, here's what we hear Because the things that we allow into our hearts to defile our hearts and There's a lot of filth in this world There are pits of muck dug by the enemy of our souls and the world loves to play in that muck But we are called out of it But don't just get out of the muck also get into the word and get into prayer If you wore your shoes into the mud, it's not enough to just say well I won't wear them into the mud anymore. You still have to clean those shoes and The way that we clean our hearts is not just to protect them from the world's filth But also to wash them in the word and in prayer and in worship There are scientifically proven links Between the filth that we allow into our hearts and the problems in our families and in our communities But the real reason we clean up our hearts is because this is the temple of God It was purchased with the precious blood of Christ He is holy and deserves holy temple and because he commands repent And so if we want to follow him, we must begin by cleaning out his temple Next we must follow Jesus into the Father's work Matthew 21 14 says then the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them Luke 1947 says that he was teaching daily in the temple and If you remember the story from Jesus childhood when Joseph and Mary finally found the lost young Jesus Luke 2 49 says that Jesus said to them. Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? It is God's will that every Christian as they are able Should participate in the work of the Great Commission The Great Commission comes from the end of the book of Matthew When Jesus commands his disciples saying all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations Labtizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo I am with you always even to the end of the age That is the Great Commission and that is what God has given to each believer to go Because all authority has been given to him. We must go into the world and make disciples of all nations Many of us hear that Great Commission and myself included We think well, I'm nothing special. I'm Certainly Jesus was calling godly powerful men to this work not ordinary me But no, actually he was calling a bunch of fishermen and tax collectors Men who stattered at the very first sign of trouble Men who probably in their youth tried out for the privilege of following a rabbi and And who didn't make the cut they were just ordinary people First Corinthians tells us that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise and has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty If you feel you're weak and foolish, then you are exactly what God is looking for God lifts up those who the world puts down and God uses those who the world says are useless Now this is the point where many pastors might say I'm not calling all of you to full-time ministry But as I thought about it, you know what? He is he is calling all of you to full-time ministry. He's just not calling you all to be pastors or missionaries Some of you your full-time ministry is to be a full-time godly parent or a godly grandparent For some of you your full-time ministry is being a godly neighbor Some of you give rides to people who can't drive or visit shut-ins Some of you are a godly witness and intercessor for your unsaved relatives Some of you fix things that when they get broken some of you clean Some of you answer the phones when Jennifer is out of the office Full-time ministry doesn't necessarily mean standing up here and preaching every Sunday It just means being godly and God focused wherever you are at all times Busy life is not an excuse because you're called to bring your ministry into whatever it is that is making your life so busy We spoke about this two weeks ago Whenever you're about to do anything Anything at all just stop and ask How am I going to glorify God here? Doesn't matter if you're about to write software for Edmond the Duck When your day starts when you step into work whenever you do whatever it is you're about to do just say How am I going to glorify God here? First Corinthians 10 31 says whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do it all to the glory of God If you are following Jesus you must bring your father's ministry into your life And finally number three we must follow Jesus into times of testing betrayal and persecution Matthew 22 15 says then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle him in his talk Matthew 26 starting in verse 14 says then one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and said What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you and? They counted out to him 30 pieces of silver so from that time he sought opportunity to betray him There will always be those who don't want you meddling with the status quo Whether it's sons of the devil engaging in physical violence towards Christians as we see in the Middle East Whether it's just smiling Christian brothers telling you we don't do things that way here You are going to run into those who don't want you doing what God's called you to do How do we handle this well, I'll let Jesus answer from Luke 21 As he's telling them about the future and about the times of tribulation that must come he says before all these things They will lay their hands on you and persecute you Delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons You will be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake, but it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers relatives and friends and They will put some of you to death And you will be hated by all from my name's sake But not a hair of your head shall be lost by your patience possess your souls Friends we do not worship Carved blocks of wood or stone we worship the living God The creator of heaven and earth and he has put his spirit within us The Holy Spirit is God's promised helper You can't always sense his presence, but he is always there because he is promised that he will never leave us or forsake us He will remind us of what we've learned He will whisper insights into our heart regarding our current situation and He is our comforter who will guard our souls as we pass through the valley Now Not only do we make it through our times of testing by relying on the Holy Spirit, but we also rely on each other Romans 12 4 through 5 says for as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function So we being many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another We are all orphans adopted into the family of Christ And although the person sitting across from you may be someone completely different from you by the world standards You share the bond of family with that person And God calls us to care for one another The way we care for family or the way that we're supposed to care for family The people here have what you need and God designed it to be that way So get to know these people Invite them over for dinner Start up conversations with them Some of them are administrative and have the gift of helping and they will help you sort out your messy life Some of them are intercessors and will help you break through that spiritual darkness that's attacking you and your family Some of them have the gift of hospitality and just want you to feel loved and welcomed They can't use their God-given gifts on you unless you open up to them and let them so go for it The Lord Jesus who loves you is calling you he says follow me He has a different path for each one of you sometimes he will lead you into green pastures by calm waters and Sometimes he will lead you through the valley of the shadow But at all times he will be with you if you trust and obey him If you've wandered off the path, he is eager to welcome you back In fact, I know for certain that he would leave the 99 found sheep to go off in search of a lost one Because he is the good shepherd Follow him as he reveals to you the condition of your heart the stuff in there he wants to clean out There's stuff in there. You don't even know about But he is patient and loving and he will little by little guide you through all of that He will patiently conform your heart to his until you get to a place where you are no longer have an appetite For the spiritual junk food you used to binge on Follow Jesus by realizing the providence of the situation he has placed you in your family your work your neighborhood Your heavenly father has a heart and a plan for all of these people and situations So Begin to ask yourself what would Jesus do for my neighbor? How would Jesus treat my co-worker? What one person can I pray for in the two minutes that I have right now? Turn your ordinary life into a life of full-time ministry and Follow Jesus when times get tough Don't wait for the trials to begin before developing your time in prayer and in the word start that stuff today so that you can remain close to the shepherd of your soul as you pass through the valley and Learn to lean on the people here in your spiritual family. We're all in this together and I need you Just as much as I need my kidneys God has fashioned us into a body that cares for one another So look for opportunities to care for the people here, but don't also forget to rely on the care that people here have to offer There is someone who is kinder than I am capable of describing More lovely and patient and forgiving than your heart is willing to believe and he wants you with him But to do so you must follow. Let's pray Heavenly good shepherd We are so humbled and so blessed that you have called to each one of us to come and follow you And God we praise you and we thank you for the forgiveness the grace and the mercy that you will lavish upon us If we will just humbly come to you and obey your command to follow Please God touch each one of our hearts with a reminder from your Holy Spirit that you have never left us and that you will never forsake us You are the shepherd of our souls and for this we praise you in your beautiful name we pray Amen