

Good morning! Do you consider yourself evangelical? If so, do you ever tell anyone about Jesus? A poll taken a few years ago revealed that 95% of people who self-describe as “evangelical Christians” have not talked with anyone about Jesus any time in the last five years. How evangelical is that? OK, so you may be different. Maybe you share your faith with others. What’s your message when you tell people about Jesus? One of the problems when we share our faith is that we don’t tell the whole story. “Jesus will heal you, physically and spiritually. From now on, the Holy Spirit will guide you. Jesus will solve all of your problems!” We set people up for failure and when life isn’t what they expected, they often walk away. Have you seen this happen? I certainly have. This morning, let’s listen in together as Jesus gathers his followers to see what He said to them:

Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it.”

Luke 9:23-24

You’ve probably heard of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. We think of him as a great theologian but he was actually a youth group leader who eventually started the Confessing Church movement. You also might not know that Bonhoeffer could have had a prosperous and safe ministry in the US. He came to the New York in 1939 and taught at Union Theological Seminary. Faculty and friends urged him to stay but he felt that staying there and avoiding the troubles in Germany was not what God had called him to do. He went back to Germany and began to live the subversive life of faith that eventually led to his death. Bonhoeffer said, “When Christ calls a man He bids him come and die.” That message is consistent with Jesus’ message in today’s passage. In fact, all of the men Jesus was talking to in today’s passage were eventually either martyred or imprisoned for their faith, as was Bonhoeffer. Jesus’ message to potential followers is not a cost-benefit analysis. It isn’t all roses. It’s a message of sacrifice and death. Let’s read it again: “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it.” Many people who call themselves Christians don’t want to pick up a cross. They are coming to Jesus to become more comfortable. These “disciples” aren’t willing to sacrifice anything. They want Jesus to do all of the sacrificing but according to Jesus, that’s not what it means to be His follower. Let me ask you this morning: What will you sacrifice to follow Jesus today?