

Monday Quotes



Grain

“The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ.”

–Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Field

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” ³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Mark 8:31-37

Thoughts by Judy Mills, Madison

The disciples have been waiting for the Messiah who would free them from oppression by the Romans and restore the state of Israel. They thought that time was close at hand. When Jesus instead predicts that he will be killed, the disciples must have been overcome with disbelief and disappointment. Peter likely spoke for all of them when he rebuked Jesus. Jesus’s reaction to this is swift and unrelenting.

It is shocking for Jesus to refer to Peter as Satan, given their close relationship and considering that Peter had just named Him as the Messiah. Despite His recent admonition that the disciples must not tell anyone who He is, Jesus then instructs his disciples and the crowd what they must do to follow the Son of Man. It is not an easy path to tread: “those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” This is hard for us to understand, even with the knowledge that Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. Imagine how confusing it must have been for those who heard Jesus speak the words on that day.

Many early followers of Jesus did “take up their cross” and lost their lives in service of the Gospel. Peter was famously crucified upside down. Even today, some Christians put their lives at risk, observing their faith in countries where Christianity is either forbidden or extremely dangerous to practice (such as Afghanistan, North Korea, Somalia, Libya, and Yemen). In the U.S., we are fortunate to worship without fear of persecution.

However, we face a challenge that may be less perilous but nearly as daunting. Many in our society “set their mind not on divine things but on human things.” Attendance is down at most churches; the percentage of Americans who attend church at least monthly fell from about 50% in 2014 to 45% in 2018-19, according to Pew Research Center (it has held pretty steady since the pandemic, although in-person worship has declined). In 2019, 4500 churches closed, while only 3000 new churches opened, according to NPR/Lifeway Research. Are fewer Americans losing their life for Jesus’s sake? Are we gaining the whole world but forfeiting our eternal lives? In this season of Lent, let us take up our cross and follow Christ, showing others through our words and deeds what it means to be a Christian. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Judy