



THE INVITATION

EASTER SERIES

Luke 9.21-25

Every Easter season the message is always the same. I guess it has to be. Changing the Easter story would do more than raise a few eyebrows. Jesus went to Jerusalem for the purpose of dying. He gave his body to a death he didn't deserve, was buried, and then conquered death by rising from the grave on the third day. In so doing, Jesus won a victory over Sin and Death, a victory that opened the door once and for all for people to be reconciled to God, to experience life as it was meant to be. Jesus did something for us that needed to be done, something that only he could do, something for which the cross has become an enduring symbol. The cross beckons to us, invites us to step forward and share in the victory of Jesus, to be reconciled to God, to take a step toward life as it was meant to be.

I believe all of it. I just have one question. Then what? Once I step to the cross, once I accept what Jesus has done on my behalf, then what? When do I get the life, that promised real life? When do things start looking different? When do I start to experience change? I have wrestled with these questions for a long time. Perhaps the biggest one for me has been, if Jesus did it all on the cross then is there anything left for me to do? The answer has always been, "No. Jesus did it all." Therefore, we are supposed to sit and wait, wait for him to do something in us and for us to bring about the life he has promised. I am just supposed to keep on living and waiting.

I don't know about you, but that has been wholly unsatisfying for me for a long time. I just didn't know what to do with it. I just couldn't imagine that Jesus went to the cross simply to have me continue my life on as I had before, only now with the certainty that God and I were on good terms. So I started poking around with what Jesus had to say about the cross, how he interpreted the Easter event. What I discovered was something no one ever taught me before. Jesus was pretty plain. He was about to do something that only he could do, something wonderful and mysterious on the cross that would open the door to new life. The cross certainly was an invitation to this new life. However, the cross was more. Much more. The cross was also an invitation to a new way of living, a crucified way of living. The cross stands as an invitation for me to die, not once and for all but as a way of life. The cross beckons me to daily reject myself and my well-being as my ultimate point of reference in the world. The cross calls me to engage in the daily practice of putting aside those parts of me that stand in opposition to God and His life so that God's life might become my own. In other words, I found that the cross stands not as an invitation to new life in which I sit but as an invitation to a life in which I am very active, active with God in the process of becoming the person God has always meant me to be. It is an invitation to a journey, a journey of my own death, burial, and resurrection. I am learning that it is in this journey and only this journey that real life is found.

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Family Inventory:** The cross invites us to set aside ourselves and our well-being as our primary point of reference in the world so that God might take center stage. That the cross invites us to this indicates that God is not center for many of us. This week, consider taking a family inventory to determine what is most important to you. You might do this as a family one evening. Ask your family members to say what they think is most important to your family. To be sure you are being honest, ask how your actions reflect what you value. Once you have determined what is most important to your family, read Luke 9.21-25 and ask what Jesus' words have to say about your present inventory. What kind of inventory would be in keeping with Jesus' words? Think as a family about what steps you might take so that your inventory might begin to change. Don't think drastic steps, think small daily steps that over time can bring about large change.

We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .

- **Letting go:** The cross stands as an invitation to let go of life as we know it so that we might grasp the life God offer us. Letting go is a process of relinquishing false ideas about what life is really all about. Often we are not aware that these ideas are present, guiding our lives. This week consider giving up something that is important to you. This might be an attitude such as having to be right or an action such as having to have the last word. Your item of importance might be a title or role you have, or even an object such as your home or car. Consider how you might let go of your item this week. As you let go this week pay attention to the feelings and thoughts that you experience. These reveal how you truly feel and the place this item has in your life. Take these thoughts and feelings to God. Ask Him what He thinks and what He would have you to do in response.