



*The Way of
The Cross
Leads Home*

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Overview

The way of the cross leads home

Bu Jessie B. Pounds

I must need go home by the way of the cross,

There's no other way but this.

I shall ne're get site of the gates of light;

If the way of the cross I miss.

I must needs go on in the blood sprinkled way,

The path that the savior trod,

If I ever climb to the heights sublime.

Where the soul is at home with God.

Then I bid farewell to the way of the world

To walk in it never more;

For the Lord say, "Come." And I seek my home,

Where he waits at the open door:

Refrain

The way of the cross leads home,

The way of the cross leads home.

It is good to know as I onward go,

The way of the cross leads home.

Those who follow Jesus must take up their cross.

Mark 8:34

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

The Romans, Mark’s original audience, knew what taking up the cross meant. Death on a cross was a form of execution used by Rome for dangerous criminals. A prisoner carried his own cross to the place of execution, signifying submission to Rome’s power.

Jesus used the image of carrying a cross to illustrate the ultimate submission required of his followers. He is not against pleasure, nor was he saying that we should seek pain needlessly. Jesus was talking about the heroic effort needed to follow him moment by moment, to do his will even when the work is difficult and the future looks bleak.

To the saved, the cross is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1 CORINTHIANS

The Meaning of the Cross	Be considerate of one another because of what Christ has
1 Cor. 1:18-2:16	done for us. There is no place for pride or a know-it-all attitude. We are to have the mind of Christ.

The Story of the
Last Supper
1 Cor. 11:23-29

The Last Supper is a time of reflection on Christ's final words to his disciples before he died on the cross; we must celebrate this in an orderly and correct manner.

The Poem of
Love 1 Cor.
13:1-13

Love is to guide all we do. We have different gifts, abilities, likes, dislikes—but we are called, without exception, to love.

The Christian's
Destiny
1 Cor. 15:42-58

We are promised by Christ, who died for us, that, as he came back to life after death, so our perishable bodies will be exchanged for heavenly bodies. Then we will live and reign with Christ.

Believers are crucified with Christ.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

How have we been crucified with Christ? Legally, God looks at us as if we had died with Christ. Because our sins died with him, we are no longer condemned (Col. 2:13-15).

Relationally, we have become one with Christ, and his experiences are ours. Our Christian life began when, in unity with him, we died to our old life (see Romans 6:5-11). In our daily life, we must regularly crucify sinful desires that keep us from following Christ. This too is a kind of dying with him (Luke 9:23-25).

And yet the focus of Christianity is not dying, but living. Because we have been crucified with Christ, we have also been raised with him (Romans 6:5). *Legally*, we have been reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:19) and are free to grow into Christ's likeness (Romans 8:29).

And in our daily life, we have Christ's resurrection power as we continue to fight sin (Ephes. 1:19-20). We are no longer alone, for Christ lives in us—he is our power for living and our hope for the future (Col. 1:27).

Believe in the cross and receive eternal life.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

The entire gospel comes to a focus in this verse. God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets the pattern of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love someone dearly, you are willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice.

God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us the new life that he had bought for us. When we share the gospel with others, our love must be like Jesus'—willingly giving up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

Some people are repulsed by the idea of eternal life because their lives are miserable. But eternal life is not an extension of a person's miserable, mortal life; eternal life is God's life embodied in Christ given to all believers now as a guarantee that they will live forever. In eternal life there is no death, sickness, enemy, evil, or sin.

When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life is all we have. In reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity. Receive this new life by faith and begin to evaluate all that happens from an eternal perspective.

To "believe" is more than intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means to put our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us. It is to put Christ in charge of our present plans and eternal destiny. Believing is both trusting his words as reliable, and relying on him for the power to change.

If you have never trusted Christ, let this promise of everlasting life be yours—and believe.

Jesus remained on the cross for our salvation.

Mark 15:30

Save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

Jesus could have saved himself, but he endured this suffering because of his love for us. He could have chosen not to take the pain and humiliation; he could have killed those who mocked him—but he suffered through it all because he loved even his enemies.

We had a significant part in the drama that afternoon because our sins were on the cross too. Jesus died on that cross for us, and the penalty for our sins was paid by his death.

The only adequate response we can make is to confess our sin and freely accept the fact that Jesus paid for it so we wouldn't have to. Don't insult God with indifference toward the greatest act of genuine love in history.

Christ dying on the cross shows God love for us.

Romans 5:8

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were still sinners—these are amazing words. God sent Jesus Christ to die for us, not because we were good enough, but because he loved us. Whenever you feel uncertain about God’s love for you, remember that he loved you even before you turned to him. If God loved you when you were a rebel, he can surely strengthen you, now that you love him in return.

To become worthy of God, we must take up our cross.

Matthew 10:38

And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

To take our cross and follow Jesus means to be willing to publicly identify with him, to experience almost certain opposition, and to be committed to face even suffering and death for his sake.

For the joy before him, Jesus endured the cross.

Hebrews 12:2

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Christian life involves hard work. It requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit.

To live effectively, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from him to stare at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ, not ourselves, and we must always keep him in sight.

Jesus nailed our record of debt to the cross.

Colossians 2:14

By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

The problem that Paul was combating in the Colossian church was similar to Gnosticism (from the Greek word for knowledge).

This heresy (a teaching contrary to Biblical doctrine) undermined Christianity in several basic ways:

- (1) It insisted that important secret knowledge was hidden from most believers; Paul, however, said that Christ provides all the knowledge we need.
- (2) It taught that the body was evil; Paul countered that God himself lived in a body—that is, he was embodied in Jesus Christ.
- (3) It contended that Christ only seemed to be human, but was not; Paul insisted that Jesus is fully human and fully God.

Gnosticism became fashionable in the second century. Even in Paul's day, these ideas sounded attractive to many, and exposure to such teachings could easily seduce a church that didn't know Christian doctrine well.

Similar teachings still pose significant problems for many in the church today. We combat heresy by becoming thoroughly acquainted with God's Word through personal study and sound Bible teaching

God's gift of salvation is eternal life.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are free to choose between two masters, but you are not free to manipulate the consequences of your choice. Each of the two masters pays with his own kind of currency. The currency of sin is death. That is all you can expect or hope for in life without God. Christ's currency is eternal life—new life with God that begins on earth and continues forever with God. What choice have you made?

Eternal life is a free gift from God. If it is a gift, then it is not something that we earn, nor something that must be paid back. Consider the foolishness of someone who receives a gift given out of love and then offers to pay for it.

A gift cannot be purchased by the recipient. A more appropriate response to a loved one who offers a gift is graceful acceptance with gratitude. Our salvation is a gift of God, not something of our own doing (Ephes. 2:8-9). He saved us because of his mercy, not because of any righteous things that we have done (Titus 3:5).

How much more we should accept with thanksgiving the gift that God has freely given to us.

Jesus became obedient, even to his death on the cross.

Philippians 2:8

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

These verses are probably from a hymn sung by the early Christian church. The passage holds many parallels to the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53.

As a hymn, it was not meant to be a complete statement about the nature and work of Christ. Several key characteristics of Jesus Christ, however, are praised in this passage:

- (1) Christ has always existed with God;
- (2) Christ is equal to God because he *is* God (John 1:1ff; Col. 1:15-19);

(3) Though Christ is God, he became a man in order to fulfill God's plan of salvation for all people;

(4) Christ did not just have the appearance of being a man—he actually became human to identify with our sins;

(5) Christ voluntarily laid aside his divine rights and privileges out of love for his Father;

(6) Christ died on the cross for our sins so we wouldn't have to face eternal death;

(7) God glorified Christ because of his obedience;

(8) God raised Christ to his original position at the Father's right hand, where he will reign forever as our Lord and Judge.

How can we do anything less than praise Christ as our Lord and dedicate ourselves to his service!

Often people excuse selfishness, pride, or evil by claiming their rights. They think, "I can cheat on this test; after all, I deserve to pass this class," or "I can spend all this money on myself—I worked hard for it," or "I can get an abortion; I have a right to control my own body."

But as believers, we should have a different attitude, one that enables us to lay aside our rights in order to serve others. If we say we follow Christ, we must also say we want to live as he lived.

We should develop his attitude of humility as we serve, even when we are not likely to get recognition for our efforts. Are you selfishly clinging to your rights, or are you willing to serve?

Death on a cross (crucifixion) was the form of capital punishment that Romans used for notorious criminals. It was excruciatingly painful and humiliating. Prisoners were nailed or tied to a cross and left to die.

Death might not come for several days, and it usually came by suffocation when the weight of the weakened body made breathing more and more difficult. Jesus died as one who was cursed (Galatians 3:13). How amazing that the perfect man

should die this most shameful death so that we would not have to face eternal punishment!

Take up your cross and become a disciple of Christ.

Luke 14:27

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Jesus saves the dying thief on the cross.

Luke 23:43

And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

God is our refuge and will deliver us.

Psalm 91:1-16

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

God is a shelter, a refuge when we are afraid. The writer's faith in the Almighty God as Protector would carry him through all the dangers and fears of life. This should be a picture of our trust—trading all our fears for faith in him, no matter how intense our fears. To do this we must “dwell” and “rest” with him (Psalm 91:1). By entrusting ourselves to his protection and pledging our daily devotion to him, we will be kept safe

Those in Christ are free from condemnation.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

“Not guilty; let him go free”—what would those words mean to you if you were on death row? The fact is that the whole human race *is* on death row, justly condemned for repeatedly breaking God’s holy law. Without Jesus we would have no hope at all. But thank God! He has declared us not guilty and has offered us freedom from sin and power to do his will.

A healthy tree produces good fruit.

Matthew 7:17

So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

Those who believe and are baptized will be saved.

Mark 16:16

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

It is not the water of baptism that saves, but God’s grace accepted through faith in Christ. Because of Jesus’ response to the criminal on the cross who died with him, we know it is possible to be saved without being baptized (Luke 23:43). Baptism alone, without faith, does not automatically bring a person to heaven. Those who refuse to believe will be condemned, regardless of whether or not they have been baptized.

We should lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 3:16

By this we know love that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

Real love is an action, not a feeling. It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others.

How can we lay down our lives? By serving others with no thought of receiving anything in return. Sometimes it is easier to say we'll die for others than to truly live for them—this involves putting others' desires first. Jesus taught this same principle of love in John 15:13.

Test and see if the Spirit is from God.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

“Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits” means that we shouldn't believe everything we hear just because someone says it is a message inspired by God.

There are many ways to test teachers to see if their message is truly from the Lord. One is to check to see if their words match what God says in the Bible.

Other tests include their commitment to the body of believers (1 John 2:19), their life-style (1 John 3:23-24), and the fruit of their ministry (1 John 4:6).

But the most important test of all, says John, is what they believe about Christ. Do they teach that Jesus is fully God and fully man? Our world is filled with voices claiming to speak for God. Give them these tests to see if they are indeed speaking God's

Believe the words of God and receive eternal life.

John 5:24

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

“Eternal life”—living forever with God—begins when you accept Jesus Christ as Savior. At that moment, new life begins in you (2 Cor. 5:17). It is a completed transaction. You still will face physical death, but when Christ returns again, your body will be resurrected to live forever (1 Cor. 15).

Friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God.

James 4:1-17

What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it the whole army of evil desires at war within you?

You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it.

And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God.

What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful? [6] He gives us more and more strength to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say,

"God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble."

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites.

Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor.

Don't speak evil against each other, my dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize each other and condemn each other, then you are criticizing and condemning God's law. But you are not a judge who can decide whether the law is right or wrong. Your job is to obey it. God alone, who made the law, can rightly judge among us. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to condemn your neighbor?

Look here, you people who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what will happen tomorrow? For your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.

What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." Otherwise you will be boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil.

Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.

Conflicts and disputes among believers are always harmful. James explains that these quarrels result from evil desires battling within us—we want more possessions, more money, higher status, more recognition.

When we want badly enough to fulfill these desires, we fight in order to do so. Instead of aggressively grabbing what we want, we should submit ourselves to God, ask God to help us get rid of our selfish desires, and trust him to give us what we really need.

James mentions the most common problems in prayer: not asking, asking for the wrong things, asking for the wrong reasons. Do you talk to God at all? When you do, what do you talk about? Do you ask only to satisfy your desires?

Do you seek God's approval for what you already plan to do? Your prayers will become powerful when you allow God to change your desires so that they perfectly correspond to his will for you (1 John 3:21-22).

There is nothing wrong with wanting a pleasurable life. God gives us good gifts that he wants us to enjoy (James 1:17; Ephes. 4:7; 1 Tim. 4:4-5).

But having friendship with the world involves seeking pleasure at others' expense or at the expense of obeying God. Pleasure that keeps us from pleasing God is sinful; pleasure from God's rich bounty is good.

4:4-6 The cure for evil desires is humility (see Proverbs 16:18-19; 1 Peter 5:5-6). Pride makes us self-centered and leads us to conclude that we deserve all we can see, touch, or imagine. It creates greedy appetites for far more than we need.

We can be released from our self-centered desires by humbling ourselves before God, realizing that all we really need is his approval. When the Holy Spirit fills us, we see that this world's seductive attractions are only cheap substitutes for what God has to offer.

How can you come near to God? James gives five ways:

- (1) Submit to God (James 4:7). Yield to his authority and will, commit your life to him and his control, and be willing to follow him.
- (2) Resist the devil (James 4:7). Don't allow Satan to entice and tempt you.
- (3) Wash your hands . . . and purify your hearts (that is, lead a pure life) (James 4:8). Be cleansed from sin, replacing your desire to sin with your desire to experience God's purity.
- (4) Grieve and mourn and wail in sincere sorrow for your sins (James 4:9). Don't be afraid to express deep heartfelt sorrow for what you have done.
- (5) Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6).

Humbling ourselves means recognizing that our worth comes from God alone.

To be humble involves working with his power according to his guidance, not with our own independent effort. Although we do not deserve God's favor, he reaches out to us in love and gives us worth and dignity, despite our human shortcomings.

Jesus bore our sins in his body.

1 Peter 2:24-25

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Peter had learned about suffering from Jesus. He knew that Jesus' suffering was part of God's plan (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47) and was intended to save us (Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28). He also knew that all who follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer (Mark 8:34-35).

Peter learned these truths from Jesus and passed them on to us.

Christ died for our sins, in our place, so we would not have to suffer the punishment we deserve. This is called substitutionary atonement

All Scripture is breathed by God.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

By the time of Peter's writing, Paul's letters already had a widespread reputation. Notice that Peter spoke of Paul's letters as if they were on a level with "the other Scriptures." Already the early church was thinking of Paul's letters as inspired by God.

You have been saved through grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

When someone gives you a gift, do you say, “That’s very nice—now how much do I owe you?” No, the appropriate response to a gift is “Thank you.” Yet how often Christians, even after they have been given the gift of salvation, feel obligated to try to work their way to God. Because our salvation and even our faith are gifts, we should respond with gratitude, praise, and joy.

We become Christians through God’s unmerited grace, not as the result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service on our part. However, out of gratitude for this free gift, we will seek to help and serve others with kindness, love, and gentleness, and not merely to please ourselves.

While no action or work we do can help us obtain salvation, God’s intention is that our salvation will result in acts of service. We are not saved merely for our own benefit but to serve Christ and build up the church (Ephes. 4:12).

You have received the Spirit from God.

1 Corinthians 2:12-15

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

Paul’s words are authoritative because their source was the Holy Spirit. Paul was not merely giving his own personal views or his personal impression of what God had said. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the very thoughts and words of God.

Non-Christians cannot understand God, and they cannot grasp the concept that God's Spirit lives in believers. Don't expect most people to approve of or understand your decision to follow Christ.

It all seems so silly to them. Just as a tone-deaf person cannot appreciate fine music, the person who rejects God cannot understand God's beautiful message. With the lines of communication broken, he or she won't be able to hear what God is saying to him or her.

No one can comprehend God (Romans 11:34), but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believers have insight into some of God's plans, thoughts, and actions—they, in fact, have the "mind of Christ."

Through the Holy Spirit we can begin to know God's thoughts, talk with him, and expect his answers to our prayers. Are you spending enough time with Christ to have his very mind in you? An intimate relationship with Christ comes only from spending time consistently in his presence and in his Word. Read Phil. 2:5ff for more on the mind of Christ.

The word was God from the beginning.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In this Gospel, John provides clear evidence that Jesus is the Son of God and that by believing in him we may have eternal life.

John also provides unique material about Jesus' birth. He did not come into being when he was born, because he is eternal.

What Jesus taught and what he did are tied inseparably to who he is. John shows Jesus as fully human and fully God. Although Jesus took upon himself full humanity and lived as a man, he never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the source of eternal life.

This is the truth about Jesus, and the foundation of all truth. If we cannot or do not believe this basic truth, we will not have enough faith to trust our eternal destiny to him. That is why John wrote this Gospel—to build faith and confidence in Jesus Christ so that we may believe that he truly was and is the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

John wrote to believers everywhere, both Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). As one of Jesus' 12 disciples, John was an eyewitness, so his story is accurate.

His book is not a biography (like the book of Luke); it is a thematic presentation of Jesus' life. Many in John's original audience had a Greek background.

Greek culture encouraged worship of many mythological gods, whose supernatural characteristics were as important to Greeks as genealogies were to Jews. John shows that Jesus is not only different from but superior to these gods of mythology.

Become a neighbor to the needy.

Luke 10:30-37

Jesus replied with an illustration: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes and money, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

"By chance a Jewish priest came along; but when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by.

A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt deep pity. [34] Kneeling beside him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

The next day he handed the innkeeper two pieces of silver and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill runs higher than that,' he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.'

"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

From the parable we learn three principles about loving our neighbor:

- (1) Lack of love is often easy to justify, even though it is never right;
- (2) Our neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, or social background who is in need; and
- (3) Love means acting to meet the person's need. Wherever you live, there are needy people close by. There is no good reason for refusing to help.

You cannot serve God and money.

Luke 16:13

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Money has the power to take God's place in your life. It can become your master. How can you tell if you are a slave to Money?

- (1) Do you think and worry about it frequently?
- (2) Do you give up doing what you should do or would like to do in order to make more money?
- (3) Do you spend a great deal of your time caring for your possessions?
- (4) Is it hard for you to give money away?

(5) Are you in debt?

Money is a hard master and a deceptive one. Wealth promises power and control, but often it cannot deliver. Great fortunes can be made—and lost—overnight, and no amount of money can provide health, happiness, or eternal life.

How much better it is to let God be your Master. His servants have peace of mind and security, both now and forever.

Jesus is the Messiah sent from God.

Luke 9:18-24

One day as Jesus was alone, praying, he came over to his disciples and asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

"Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other ancient prophets risen from the dead."

Then he asked them, "Who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah sent from God!"

Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about this. "For I, the Son of Man, must suffer many terrible things," he said. "I will be rejected by the leaders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. I will be killed, but three days later I will be raised from the dead."

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life."

The Christian faith goes beyond knowing what others believe. It requires us to hold beliefs for ourselves. When Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" he wants us to take a stand. Who do *you* say Jesus is?

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print