

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Prior to the 2016 presidential election a 12 year-old girl was seen bursting into tears when she found out that she was going to see "The Donald!" Many Americans still think that Donald Trump is the answer to our nation's problems. People still want to see "the Donald." He's different, charismatic, and people are curious.

There were also "certain Greeks," who wanted to "see Jesus. But their desire was more than idle curiosity. They believed that Jesus was a great teacher of the Jewish faith, possibly even "The Christ." The word they used means that they wanted to *get to know* Jesus. They hoped to become His disciples and share His glory.

But our Lord was not a prominent figure in the business world, or a hollow, Hollywood celebrity! So he explains in vs. 23-24: *"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."*

The "glory" of the grain-seed comes after its burial in the ground. Only then does it produce fruit. So also, the glory of Jesus Christ, "the Son of Man," would come *through His death and burial*. In His resurrection from the dead He would show Himself to be the living Savior of mankind. When all the believing saints are finally gathered into heaven on the Last Day it will become clear to all the world that the *fruit* of Christ death and burial is the whole glorified Church of Christ!

The glorification of the Son of Man would come at great cost to Him. That is what Isaiah prophesied of Christ when he said that *after the Messiah had offered His soul in payment for sin, He would see those born of Him – the fruits of His labor – be satisfied and enjoy long life.* (Cf. Isaiah 53:10-11) Those who wish to see "The Donald" can "take him or leave him." But

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO SEE THE CHRIST,

I.

you must *"get to know" Him* like these Greeks. *First, you must know of His route to glory.* Donald Trump's route to the presidential crown was one of pride, riches and pleasures in this world. The route of "The Christ" to His crown was through humble, self-denial, all the way to His death on the cross!

How can we *really see and "get to know"* Him without a willingness to follow His route to glory? In v. 25 Jesus says that if we love our life so much that we are unwilling to give up any part of it *for His sake* – whether our pet sins, pleasures, wealth, health or whatever – we will "lose it." We will lose the true life – *life everlasting!*

The world preaches the opposite message: *"Don't let your life slip by! For all your hard work, you 'owe' it to yourself to experience all the fancy food, drink, travel, and pleasure you can. Do it before life in this world is gone!"*

But trying to preserve one's life in this world can lead to self destruction"! What happens when, parents don't teach their children to take responsibility for their mistakes in life, or refuse to correct them, because they don't want to hurt their feelings? – Many children *lose* their lives in the streets, jails, and drug-abuse centers! What happens when a person intentionally takes his own life *only* because he no longer has the "quality" of life which he once enjoyed? He loses *eternal* life!

What happens to the person who loves himself so much that he refuses to put away and crucify his fleshly lusts, or humble himself before God as a wretched sinner? Such a person clings to his life in the flesh, and loses *eternal life*!

The never-ending temptation is to love and pamper our life above all else! But Jesus walked in the opposite direction. He surrendered His life *for us*! That was His route to eternal glory.

II.

If we really want to see Jesus and get to know Him, *we must follow His route to glory!* He says in v. 26: "*If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me.*" In other words, Jesus says, "*If you follow my example by 'hating' your life in this world, you will keep it for eternal life.*" What does he mean?

Like me, you may have old photographs of scowling ancestors! There's was a harder life than ours for sure, but did they *hate* their life? Were they so stern-looking because they denied themselves all pleasure in life, like certain Catholic monks and hermits did in centuries past?

Is this what our Lord means when He tells us to "*hate*" our life? No! Solomon tells us "*It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.*" (Eccles.5:18) But if we are truly Jesus' disciples and servants who really want to *get to know Him*, then we will follow Him.

It's easy to walk through the doors of our church in SC. But those who do should recognize that they are following the path of the cross. Red crosses are in the glass *panes* of those doors. Our craftsmen also made our church doors with a cross in the middle of the panels. This custom has continued since the early builders of Christian churches chose the words of Christ, "*I AM the door*" (John 10:9), as their motto.

Our Lord knows how easy it is for us to settle for a little Christianity in our lives, – a little worship, a little offering and service – as long as the living of our lives is not hindered too much! That's why He uses such strong language when He says: "*If you wish to serve and follow Me, you must hate your life in this world. Take up your cross and follow Me.*"

We must be willing to give up whatever competes with our eternal life in Christ and our service to Him – whether money, pleasures, the honor and praise of men, or even friends and family!

This is a "hard saying"! *Who wants to see Jesus and get to know His glory, if they have to follow His route?* Sadly, not many! That's why we hear so many preaching

a "prosperity gospel" in our day. The Gospel of the cross costs too much for most!

III.

But we should not despair, for Jesus says elsewhere: *"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."* (Mt. 11:29) Don't we know that the heaviest burdens are made lighter when we look to the reward of our labor?

As a young man I worked on a three-man crew with your former pastor, John Schierenbeck. We built silo foundations one hot summer. Hand-digging the footing, hand-mixing the cement and hauling it by wheel-barrow for 12 hours every day was hard and heavy work for \$1.35/hr.!

But the burden was made much lighter as we looked forward to a shower and steak supper at the end of the day, as well as the money earned by the end of the summer! So also, if we would finally and forever *see Jesus, we must know the blessing of taking up our cross and following Him.*

Jesus says, *"Where I am, there my servant will be also."* (V. 26) He had already spoken of His *glorification* (v. 23). Now He promises that His servants will share His glory! Later, in John chapter 14, Jesus promises to "go and prepare a place for us in the "many mansions" or rooms of His "Father's house." Then He adds, *"I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, THERE you may be also."* (John 14:2-3)

Jesus further promises in the last verse of our text, *"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."* What greater reward can we HOPE for than to be forever honored by the Father in heaven? Is it worth the cost to *hate* one's life in this world in order to follow and serve "The Christ" on our way to eternal glory? May we all answer, ***"YES! I STILL want to see Jesus!" Amen.***