

The primary purpose of pain is to signal that something is wrong. Your skin and nerves send you signals to tell you to stop whatever you are doing. Your fingers scream to tell you to stop touching the stove because it is hot. Your stomach gets nauseous to tell you that you are sick. Your nerves send the signal that something is broken and you need to see a doctor. Pain is not fun, but it is useful.

But in the Christian life pain and suffering are not warnings that we have gone off track. Suffering is not a signal that we no longer have God's blessing and need to repent. For those who follow Jesus, suffering is normal and should be expected.

Our passage this morning in Luke 9:18-36 is all about suffering. And the main idea we have to wrestle with is that suffering in a Christian's life is normal. I want us to look at why.

Point 1: Jesus had to suffer (v. 18-22).

Suffering is a vital part of the mission of Jesus.

He had to suffer.

Without the suffering of Christ, our entire faith falls apart at the seams. It is no longer coherent, logical, or our sure salvation.

Verse 18, **"Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"**

Jesus' ministry flows out of His prayer life.

But this is not just about Jesus praying off by Himself.

The disciples appear to be nearby.

So, this does not mean that Jesus is praying completely alone.

Rather this is about how the crowds have left.

If you remember last week Jesus fed the 5,000.

Thousands of people were constantly around Jesus wanting to hear what He had to say.

In this moment, it appears that the crowds are no longer around.

It is just the disciples and Jesus.

Then Jesus asks the disciples a question.

"And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

He asks them what the people are saying about Jesus.

Who do the people believe Jesus is?

What do the masses say?

Have they taken a poll to see what the popular opinion is?

Verse 19, **"And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen."**

The disciples obviously have because they have an answer.

Maybe it is just what they have overheard people say.

Maybe it is what people have said to their faces.

But the crowd has no clue.

All of their answers are wrong.

But Jesus asks a significant question.

Verse 20, **"Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"**

That is the most important question.

Who is Jesus?

Who do the disciples believe that He is?

Because they have to decide for themselves.

Every single one of us has to answer the question.

Who you do say that Jesus is?

"And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

We get the best and worst of Peter here in this passage.

He is always willing to speak first, even when he shouldn't.

But here Peter gets it right.

He says that Jesus is the Christ.

Peter says, Jesus is the anointed one.

Jesus is the King who was promised.

Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus is one they have been waiting for.

The one every follower of God has prayed for since God made a promise to Eve that her seed would crush the serpent's head.

But Jesus says something strange.

Verse 21, **"And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one,"**

Jesus does not want them to tell anyone that He is the Messiah.

Jesus does not want them to correct people and tell them who He is.

Why would Jesus say this?

The answer is in verse Verse 22, **"saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."**

Because Jesus is going to have to suffer.

And suffering goes against everything they believed about the Messiah.

The Messiah is the one promised to save them.

And for them salvation was not just from their sins.

They needed to be saved as a nation.

They had been conquered by the Romans and no longer had any freedom.

Their national pride was shattered.

Much of their hope for the Messiah was that He would save them from Rome.

They wanted a Messiah who would overthrow the tyrants.

Who would gather armies.

A Messiah who would give them reason to be proud of their heritage.

We are celebrating our nations independence this weekend.

We celebrate those who died, but we especially celebrate because we won.

We are an independent nation with freedom.

Israel did not have that.

But they longed for it.

They wanted a strong Messiah who would bring freedom.

A Messiah who would make the wicked suffer.
But that is not what Jesus will do.
Jesus is the Messiah, but He is a different than they expected.
Because the Messiah must suffer.

"The son of man must suffer many things."

He is not just going to suffer a little.
Jesus will suffer so much.
The suffering Jesus will endure will define His ministry.
The suffering is the entire reason that He came.

Jesus tells His disciples just a few of these sufferings.

"and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes,"

Jesus will be rejected.
This is hard to imagine at the moment.
Jesus is incredibly popular.
Thousands of people follow Him everywhere.
His name is even reaching Herod's court.
People want to know who Jesus is and talk about Him over the dinner table.
But Jesus says He will be rejected.
People will want nothing to do with Him.

Not just anyone.
Not just people on the margins or the fools.
Jesus will be rejected by His own people.
The elders are the respected leaders in the Jewish community.
They are the most righteous and knowledgeable of the ordinary people.

Even the chief priest will reject Him.
It would have been hard to stomach the idea that the Messiah would be rejected by the most respected religious leader.
Everyone would assume the High Priest would identify the Messiah.

Even if the people were unsure, the High Priest would know when He came.

But Jesus says the High Priest will rejected Him.

The scribes will rejected Jesus.

The studious and the academics.

The experts of the law of Moses.

The ones who should know the Scriptures inside and out.

The people who would understand what the Messiah should do.

They will want nothing to do with Jesus.

No one likes to be rejected.

It hurts even if you don't care about the person who is rejecting you that much.

But it is a special kind of pain to be rejected by your own people.

To be rejected by those who should recognize you.

"and be killed,"

Ultimately, Jesus will be murdered.

He will be brought before a court on false charges.

Witnesses will lie.

He will be beaten during the trial.

Then He will be stripped naked.

Whipped almost to the point of death.

Then finally hung on a wooden cross.

His murder will be overseen by the very Roman soldiers they hoped He would defeat.

Why does Jesus tell the disciples to tell no one?

First, because the people will not understand.

The disciples themselves do not get it.

Jesus will tell them over and over that He is going to die.

Yet, when they crucify Him the disciples are shocked and devastated.

If the disciples don't get it, then the crowds certainly will not.

The crowds do not even believe Jesus is the Messiah yet.

Jesus also does not want the disciples to tell people because He is not yet in Jerusalem.

The whole narrative of Luke is building towards Jesus going to Jerusalem and the cross.

Jesus' plan is to suffer and die.

But it has to come at the right time.

It has to come in the right manner.

The disciples need to follow the plan.

But they need to understand that Jesus will suffer.

Suffering is essential to the mission and work of Christ.

He is the God who suffers on our behalf.

There is no salvation without the sacrificial death of Christ on our behalf.

Justice demands someone pay the price for sin.

Sometimes even as Christians we can forget this.

We might not forget that Christ suffered once for us.

But we forget that the way of Jesus is the way of suffering.

It was not just a one time event.

This was Christ's chosen path.

And it is one we are all meant to walk.

Point 2: We must suffer (v. 23-27).

Christians are meant to live like Jesus did.

We are to follow Him and walk in His footsteps.

That also means we are to suffer as Christ suffered.

Verse 23, **"And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."**

Jesus tells us that if we are to follow Him, then we must imitate His suffering.

We cannot follow Jesus without being willing to suffer.

The first step of suffering is **"deny himself"**

We have to be willing to deny our own desires.

For most of our world this is radical.

Our world believes that we have to be true to ourselves.

We have to listen to our desires.

To deny yourself is antiquated and inhumane.

Few things are worse than self-denial.

But Jesus also says we are to take up our cross.

As Christians we hear about crosses all the time.

This passage itself may even be overly familiar.

The cross is an instrument of execution and shame.

Only the worst criminals were killed on them.

It was shameful to be associated with one.

I also don't think Jesus just means this metaphorically either.

He is not just telling the disciples to be willing to be unselfish sometimes.

He means that they should bring a shovel and be ready to dig their own grave.

Jesus means that suffering and death are to be expected.

Every day they should expect the suffering to come.

Usually when people suffer we blame them.

We assume that they must have done something wrong.

Or we think maybe God is punishing them.

Because if you are really following God then everything should go well.

That is not the gospel.

That is not the way of Jesus.

Suffering is the normal experience of a Christian life.

We should be prepared for it.

Verse 24, **"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."**

Trying to avoid suffering and death does not work.
You will die one way or another.
You can choose the path of Christ, or your own path.
Follow Christ and you will die to yourself.
But it will save your life eternally.
Follow yourself to save yourself,
And you will die eternally.

Verse 25, **"For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?"**

You can run as far from Christ as you want.
You could be someone like Solomon.
You could achieve the American dream and be a self-made billionaire.
You could become famous and have everyone know your name.
You could have power to achieve your dreams and secure your legacy.
You could have so many comforts that you never knew suffering or any kind of displeasure.
You could bury yourself like the Pharaoh's with all your stuff around you.
And it will just stay there.
It won't save you.
It won't help you.

But the opposite of this verse is true.
Those who give up this world.
Those who are willing to give up everything for Christ.
Like the disciples who left their nets to wander the countryside.
Those who suffer for Christ will be rewarded more than you could possibly imagine.
We gain the life to come when you give up the life now.

Verse 26, **"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."**

This verse speaks about shame.

We don't always think about shame.
But shame was a very big deal for their culture.
You did not want to be shamed.
To be shamed is something to be avoided at all costs.
Here Jesus is speaking about suffering shame on His account.

He means there will be a day when the Words of Christ are seen as shameful.

People would say that only fools would follow Jesus.
Only an idiot would think He is worth listening to.

This was true in Christ's day.

When Christ was arrested Peter was afraid and ashamed to be associated with Jesus.

He denied Christ three times.

Being a Christian was shameful for three centuries after Christ.

There is a piece of Roman graffiti mocking Christians.

It depicts a donkey on a cross.

In front of the donkey is a man worshipping him.

The words say "Alexamenos worships [his] god"

Because people thought you may as well worship a donkey than someone who was crucified.

Some are still ashamed to be a Christian today.

They are ashamed to believe the miraculous stories.

That God created the world with His words,

Stopped the sun and the stars on a prayer,

Men were swallowed by fish

And demons fled at Christ's word.

Some are ashamed to believe that the Bible truly is breathed out by God.

Ashamed that God has authority over us and commands what is right.

Ashamed that God calls evil what many may call good.

Some people are only happy to be called Christians if there is no shame.
They will follow Christ if it is popular.
They will not be ashamed of Christ as long as everyone else is doing it.
But as soon as the pressure is on.
As soon as the tiniest bit of shame follows they are out.
They like Jesus when it is easy,
But they can't take the suffering.

So don't be surprised when suffering comes.
Instead, praise God that you are worthy of participating in the suffering of Christ.
And those who are not ashamed of Christ, Christ will not be ashamed of.

The rest of the verse tells us that if we are ashamed to be counted with Jesus, then Christ will be ashamed of us.
On the day of judgement after our deaths.
When we stand before Him in all of His glory, He will be ashamed of us.

But if you are not ashamed of Christ.
If you willingly suffer for Him, then He will speak up for you.
He will not be ashamed to see you on the day He returns.
When He rides across the sky He will look at you and smile.

And verse 27 is meant to be some encouragement.

Verse 27, **"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."**

Theologians debate what this means.
I think it is a reminder of the promise.

It is a reminder that we will get a glimpse of what is to come.
Following Jesus does mean that you will suffer.
But the Christian life is not one of pain only.
I don't want to make it seem like the Christian life is one of constant suffering.

Because it isn't.
You will suffer.
But it will be okay.
Because the life of Christ also has joy.

It is filled with the kingdom of God.
And before you die.
Before the ultimate and very last suffering comes.
You will get to see the wonder that comes from following Jesus.

Point 3: Glory comes after suffering (v. 28-36).

This is the good news.
The glory the disciples long for.
The glory that the Messiah will bring is coming.
But glory comes only after suffering.

This event of the Transfiguration does not just help the disciples know Jesus is God.
It is put in this specific context in the book because it has to do with suffering.

Verse 28, **"Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray."**

Luke specifically mentions that this happens 8 days later.
Details are always significant in Scripture even if we don't know why.
I think this detail is given because of Moses.

The entire transfiguration event mirrors much of what happens to Moses.
Moses ascends up on to Mount Zion and speaks to God.
Moses gets the law and brings it back down to the people.
But one detail in Exodus 24:15-16 is that God does not speak to Moses until the 7th day.

This is the best explanation that I have seen for the eight days.

Is that this is meant to show us in one more way how Jesus is better than Moses.

x

And only three of the disciples get to go up on the mountain.

Only Peter James and John get to see Jesus in His glory.

It is only the three in Jesus's innermost Circle.

Including John who was called the one Jesus loved.

Unlike Moses who went alone these three get to tag along and watch.

Verse 29, **“And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.”**

In the midst of Jesus's prayer another miracle occurs.

The appearance of Jesus's face changes.

It is altered.

Or it is transfigured.

That is why we typically refer to this event as the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Now it is not just the transformation of Jesus because that is something that happened to other gods.

Ancient Greek or Roman gods might go up to mountains and transform and change their appearances were their bodies.

But Jesus does not change into something that he is not.

And who Jesus truly is is revealed.

As Philippians 2 tells us Jesus humbled himself and poured out of himself and was willing to take the form of a man.

Jesus truly is in the form of a human body but he truly is God.

It is like being in a pitch-black room when the curtain is pulled back to let the sun in.

His face and clothing become dazzling White.

His face shines brighter than Moses'.

And Moses's face shown so bright that people asked him to cover it up and wear a mask.

But Jesus's shines like lightning.

Verse 30, **"And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah,"**

And if that isn't crazy enough Moses and Elijah appear.

And we don't know how the disciples knew that it was Moses and Elijah.

It's not like they had cameras back in that day so they would have known what they look like.

We have no idea, but I imagine they might have asked Jesus.

"Hey Jesus who are you talking to or are these some angels?"

"Oh no Peter they're not Angels this is Moses and this is Elijah now can you go sit over there we're going to have a little conversation."

What all they must have been in to see their Heroes talking to their Rabbi and their teacher.

I don't know about you but I would have given anything to be a fly on the wall that conversation.

Two of the greatest prophets who have ever lived.

Moses the man who took them out of slavery.

Man who guided them to the promised land and taught them the law and what God said because he spoke to God face to face.

Now Moses speaks to God face to face again with Jesus.

And he speaks with Elijah.

A man who defeated the prophets of ball by calling down fire from the sky.

A man who brought people back to life.

And a man who never died but just rode up to heaven in a chariot when it was his time to go.

Verse 31, **"who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."**

These men appear in their own glory and they come to talk with Jesus about what He's about to do.

They speak to Jesus about what He is about to accomplish.

They talk to Him about His departure.

They speak to Him about the suffering He is about to endure and all that He will accomplish in His rejection death and Resurrection.

And the word here for departure might be strange.

You might wonder why it says that instead of death or something else.

Well, the Greek word here is a Greek word that probably most of you know whether you know that you know it or not.

The Greek word for departure is Exodus.

We typically pronounce it in English as Exodus.

Because the entire story of The Exodus was just foreshadowing what Jesus would do in his Exodus.

Now Jesus will deliver us not just out of the land of Egypt but out of the land of sin and death.

Verse 32, **"Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him."**

Now Peter and the disciples have once again falling asleep with Jesus is praying and so they wake up while this is going on.

I don't know if you have ever woken up and then felt groggy because all of a sudden people are trying to talk to you or things are going on and it's jarring.

I don't really like to nap I only nap if I'm sick or in days that have had to preach.

And if you wake me up from a nap I'm going to be super groggy and not really know what's going on.

Imagine how confused Peter was when he wakes up and there's Jesus and dazzling lightning glory and there's Moses and there's Elijah and they're just talking about Jesus's death.

They became fully awake in a moment.

It was like dumping hot water on them.

And much like me, Peter wakes up and doesn't really know what to say.

Verse 33, **"And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said."**

That line sums up a lot of Peter's life isn't it?

For some of you maybe you can relate to that.

Peter says that they should build tents one for all of them.

Now some think this is because Peter is trying to stay up on the mountain and enjoy the glory.

I think it's more likely that Peter was trying to celebrate.

During the Festival of booths people would go out and build tents and stay in them as they worship God and celebrated how he had provided for them.

I think Peter probably had this kind of celebration in mind.

I also don't think we should give Peter too hard of a time.

Because of what in the world are you supposed to say when Jesus Moses and Elijah are talking?

Well, the answer is you're supposed to say nothing.

Just be quiet and listen

Verse 34, **"As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud."**

As Peter is giving Jesus his suggestions for how this moment could be even more special.

God the Father interrupts.

A cloud surrounds them.

Just like the clouds surrounded Mount Sinai when Moses ascends the mountain to talk to God.

And if they weren't afraid before they are definitely afraid now.

Verse 35, **"And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"**

Much like Christ's baptism a voice calls out of the clouds.
And God the Father once again affirms that Jesus is his beloved Son.
Jesus is the chosen one.
Jesus is the prophesied messiah.
Jesus is the Christ.
Jesus is their only hope.
Jesus is the rightful King your savior.

Verse 36, **"And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone."**

Jesus is the only one left so that no one can be confused as to who the Messiah is.
So that no one can be confused as to who Jesus is.
So that no scholar can come back later and say well actually this isn't really about Jesus this is about Moses or Elijah or all of us are really God's son.
Jesus is the glorified one.

"And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen."

In case you were wondering silence is the correct response.
After all of that Peter has nothing to say.
And now the glory and wonder of all that they have seen has driven them to silent contemplation.

Why does Jesus do all of this?
I think he does it as reassurance for the disciples.
He does it to show them that yes suffering is coming and yes his death is coming but so is the glory and the resurrection.
That is why back in verse 22 Jesus says he will be killed but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.
The Third day after his death at the 8th day of the week Jesus will be raised in glory.
The Transfiguration is meant to be an encouragement and a signpost.

It is a reminder to all of us that yes you will have to suffer.
Yes you will have to take up your cross you may have to even face Shane
and death.

But as Jesus was glorified after his suffering.
We will be glorified with him if we put our faith in him.
The hope of the Gospel is that there is Glory ahead of us.
But that Glory only comes through the suffering of Jesus.

Our call to worship this morning is one of my favorite passages.
They are verses I have clung tight to in my own suffering.
Because the suffering we face now is nothing compared to the
imperishable glory to come.
From the suffering that Jesus endured didn't do anything to take away
from His glory.
It only added to it.
Be encouraged beloved brothers and sisters.
Those who have put their faith in Jesus and suffered for His sake will be
glorified.

Suffering is normal for the Christian experience.
But so is Glory.
And the suffering that you experience now is nothing compared to the
glory that is to come through Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Jesus had to suffer. We will have to suffer. But glory comes after suffering.
2. If you are a believer, your suffering will lead to glory beyond all compare. They are like labor pains which give birth to eternal life. This passage is meant to encourage us in our suffering. Yes you will suffer now. But glory is come to those who follow Jesus.