

# #40 Northside Natter

23 December 2020

Today, I'm taking a brief look at **Sacrifice**.

When Jesus walked among men, he went about the coastline of the Sea of Galilee where many little villages were situated. Many folks out that way were either fishermen or farmers as self-sufficiency was the order of the day. The Sea of Galilee is 13 miles long and 7 miles wide, so that's a lot of area to walk around, but we know he took the occasional boat to get to the other side and back again.

From Nazareth to Capernaum is 43 miles (69km) and with 9 miles (15km) of walking a day, the trip takes four days. Of course, people are capable of doing 20 miles a day, but when you have a large group following you around, your progress is much slower.

Nazareth to Jerusalem will take you just over 31 hours to walk the modern roads, but in Jesus's day the way was not as easy. The leisurely trip would take him about 10 days. That's tiring for modern man, but for the Jewish population in 30AD, it was a normal part of life.

As Jesus travelled on Shanks's pony (*i.e. on foot*), he met many people and healed them, taught them about God, inspired others to become disciples and recruited his apostles.

## **Isaiah 53:4-6**

*Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet, we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

## **Matthew 8:17**

*. . . [he] Himself took our infirmities and bore out sicknesses.*

I'm not sure that we fully understand the magnitude of what Jesus sacrificed on our behalf. He sacrificed his life, his mental and physical well-being, and his own needs to save us from our stupidity. In doing this, he would have known that only a remnant of people would care enough to act on the message he brought. Yet the fact that anyone would listen at all was enough for him to go through with it. If nothing else, he knew that eleven of his apostles were going to stay the course. It was worth it to him just to know that those eleven men, his closest companions, would be with him for eternity.

How many of our closest companions would we gladly give our lives for? In a world full of selfishness and complacency, it's hard to contemplate giving up a game of football to go to a meeting let alone to give our lives for another.

Are we called to sacrifice ourselves for God? You bet we are. We are to sacrifice our human condition by bringing it into alignment with the word of God. We are to sacrifice our time by attending meetings, praying for the sick, lending a hand to those who need help, preaching the gospel whenever we find the opportunity.

Our lives ceased to belong to us when we became born again. Our lives belong to the Lord. We are his to do with as he sees fit.

Can we sacrifice ourselves the way that Christ did? We may never be called upon to literally give our lives so others may live, however, we are called upon to emulate the life of Christ in every other way.

Doing the minimum that is required puts us in the Laodicean age. We become too comfortable. We become laxer in our diligence. We become us-focused. Granted, some of us just become old and tired, but there's still enough energy to do the work of the Lord. **The more we do, the more we want to do** and the same is true if we changed the word 'more' to the word 'less'.

Surely, Jesus found it hard to keep going? All those people demanding his attention must have drained his energy and burdened his mind.

### **Mark 1:35**

*And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there [he] prayed.*

He found it tough. He needed time out from the disciples that followed him, from the apostles who had so many questions, and from the desperately ill, poor and needy who never ceased coming to him for miracles. It was hard yakka and yet he kept going for the greater good; for the will of his Father. He never focused on anything else outside of his purpose in life. He knew he was the Saviour that was to come. He knew his destiny was a priority. He knew, even though he could choose otherwise, that he was mankind's only hope.

### **Luke 14:26**

*If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yeah and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

This is the attitude Jesus had that helped him to reach his final goal. This is how we must be. We cannot be so enamoured of our families, spouse, this world, or our own lives that we become nobbled and fail to fulfill our purpose as a spirit-filled child of the living God.

Jesus let nothing hinder his God-designed purpose. We have a God-designed purpose as well and that is to continue the work that Jesus started. Can we make the sacrifices necessary? Most of us have and continue to do so. Others are learning how. While we all need to take ourselves away to a quiet place from time to time, the temptation is to prolong that break.

### **Proverbs 6:10**

*Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.*

Too much rest and relaxation can take us away which is why we need to be ever-mindful of this temptation. Can you imagine what would have happened to mankind if Jesus had decided to take a chunk of 'Time-Out' and become so carried away with the offerings of the world that he didn't get back to his purpose? Total anarchy with no way out.

We will be forever grateful to the Son of God for what he did for us. His life shows us that even in our human condition it is possible to do what he did – for he was in the same condition. It is possible to resist the temptations of the world and the expectations of those around us who do not understand our purpose. It is possible to make the necessary sacrifices to do the work of God. He did. So can we.

**John 14:12**

*Verily, verily, I say unto you: he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father.*

Jesus ran out of time to do more. He had a short window of opportunity to preach the gospel, heal the sick, help those in need, and then die for their sakes. We have a much longer period of time and greater opportunity to repeat what he did. His ministry went for three years. Ours has been ten times that, some more and some less. I can tell you that it will be a while before the Lord returns to finish what he started, but for us, it won't be any longer than our own lifetime. If we are lucky enough, we will see his return. However, the older we get the less opportunity we have left. Let's see this through, brothers and sisters. Let's not waste a precious moment of time. Let's be about our father's business and sacrifice the things we must in order to do it.