

Carrying the Cross and Following the Lord 🙏

Luke 9:21–27

11 “Jesus strictly warned the disciples.” Why was this? As Peter had answered, it was correct that Jesus was the Messiah. Shortly beforehand, Jesus had demonstrated his divine power by feeding the five thousand. The disciples’ expectations of the Messiah were filled with glory. Yet Jesus was not merely a worker of miracles who sought ease and comfort. He had to endure a wretched path of suffering and unprecedented anguish, ultimately being killed at the hands of this world's leaders (the elders, chief priests, and scribes). Of course, He would “be raised on the third day,” but...

The disciples would not die an atoning death. Nevertheless, they were expected to undergo severe trials of their own. Thus Jesus says, “Deny yourselves,” “take up your cross,” and “follow Me.” All three verbs are in the imperative. However, the first two denote a decisive act, while the final command, “follow Me,” indicates continual action. In other words, they were not to die with Him, but to persevere in life and continue to obey the Lord.

To deny oneself and take up one's cross does not mean living a life in which all joy and pleasure are sacrificed. Rather, it means choosing what is best in order to continue following the Lord. Yet it is not self-first, but Christ first. God will save the life of such a person.

"One's own cross" refers to the burdens we bear before God—our shortcomings and the sins deep within our hearts. These may be countless, yet through His atoning death Jesus lightens the cross of those who follow Him. And how heavy was the cross that He Himself bore? During Lent, we should reflect on the weight of that cross.