

Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34 NRSV)

In a secular sense, our text today, as a slogan followed, would guarantee any person's success in the wonderful world of business or art or education or sports or whatever career you may choose.

After all, what does it mean to deny yourself and take up a cross? We know what it does not mean. It does not mean in times of adversity saying in a whiny voice, "Well, I guess this is just my cross to bear." No, denying ourselves and taking up a cross has to do with discipline and hard work. It has to do with unselfishness and committing ourselves to the finest of which we are capable. It has to do with forgetting ourselves and concentrating on the needs of others. It has to do with a commitment to excellence in all things. In short, in these few words Jesus has summed up all the most helpful advice found in the self-help books.

There's a sign in a dry cleaners that reads, "No matter how bad the stain is, we'll take it out... and sew up the hole!"

How's that for excellence!?

Actually, taking up the cross of Christ means that our lives may be stained or may have holes in them, but the cross will make us whole. However, we have to be willing to be faithful in carrying the cross everyday.

Dear God, help me to being faithful in carrying the cross of Christ everyday. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Ron Newhouse



And he said **unto** them, Go ye into **all** the **world**,
and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mark 16:15