

Chapter 43

Matthew 16

The Story so Far

Jesus is King of God's world and because He is God's appointed judge everyone will meet Him one day. And so we all have a choice – will Jesus be our Saviour and King, or our Judge? To have a right relationship with God and enter His Kingdom we trust Jesus as the one who receives our punishment, and who provides the perfect life we need.

Objectives

- To show the Christian life is the best life, but also the most difficult life to live

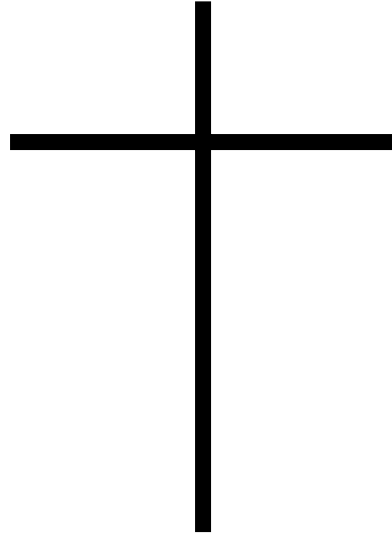
Connections

- Christian's follow the example of Jesus – He suffered, so will His followers

Summary

The Christian life is the best life because we live in our Father's world as He intended. But it is also the most difficult life as it involves suffering for Jesus. We suffer because He suffered.

Considering the Cost



The best life

The Christian life is the best life you can live, but it is not an easy life. In fact, in a strange way, the Christian life can be said to be both the best and the most difficult life to live. It is the best life because when we become Christians God accepts us and He becomes our Father. We live in our Father's world as He intended under His loving rule and blessing. We enjoy the blessings of forgiveness, adoption into His family, a relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit living in us, and the hope of a perfect life in the future. Christians also enjoy the ordinary things in life: like food, drink, music, art, sport, family and friends, because we acknowledge that they have come from God. We understand the reason for work and enjoy our rest. We do all these things to the glory of God. Christians have the most fun in life because we are learning how to live in our Father's world as He intended. People who live their lives outside God's rule are like children who choose to stay at home in the rain, and build sandcastles in the garden with mud, when what is offered to them is a day at the beach in the sun!

A difficult life (Matthew 16:24)

But Jesus also said that the Christian life is difficult. He described it in terms of self-denial and suffering.

To deny ourselves means that we surrender our own goals, ambitions and desires to King Jesus. Our plans and purposes in life are now centred on God and His Kingdom. This does not mean

that we do not pursue jobs or the studies that we would like; but rather that we do so with the purpose of helping to build God's Kingdom. We are no longer living for ourselves, but we now live for Jesus. We are citizens of His Kingdom.

Jesus' life led to the cross, which was a very offensive symbol in His culture. It represented shame and suffering. To follow Jesus is to live the same life He did, with opposition for what we believe. Christians will suffer. There is no option. But this does not necessarily mean physical sufferings like cancer, or blindness, or a difficult boss at work. All people on earth suffer these things; whether they are Christian or not. Rather, Christians suffer for the good news message about Jesus. We suffer as we try to live good and upright lives in this evil world, and we face opposition as we try to tell others about Jesus.

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