

Reflection Sunday 30th August

Matthew 16:21-28

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Who are you prepared to follow?

In these days of social media you can choose to follow people on Facebook, Twitter and no doubt other "platforms". You can choose to "un-follow" also.

In "real life" you can follow people along the road/footpath etc. Whilst driving you can choose to follow another driver who knows the way or these days you follow the direction of the SatNav. Whilst on holiday both methods of navigation were used as we travelled about 1750 miles. We had the choice of overtaking the car in front or disobeying the SatNav. But what do you do when your wife has a map and says to turn left and the SatNav directions say turn right? Whose direction do you follow?

You can follow a recipe – with varying levels of success it seems depending upon how closely you follow and the nature of your particular cooking device.

You can follow links on a computer – just try the Methodist Church website and its guidance for Covid-19 and the opening of buildings for worship; you can follow links all over the place, including the government website where you find more "clicks" to follow.

Following is part of life.

Jesus challenges us to follow his teaching, his way of living and to give that priority over everything else. When the world says "turn left" and Jesus says "turn right" – there is only one proper choice – the right choice.

The ultimate challenge is to follow wherever he leads, whatever the cost involved – the taking up of the cross is how Jesus himself put it.

That is not always the easy option. Jesus also spoke about the narrow and the wide paths. To follow Jesus can mean we live in a radically different way to many around us. Our priority through following Jesus may be very different to our neighbour, friend and family.

We hope that when we follow we end up at a destination – a recipe followed can lead to a delicious treat; a map followed leads to a destination; following a link on the Methodist Church website can lead you back to where you started (other websites can achieve the same.)

Following Jesus takes you into a new Kingdom, a new relationship, a new way of living and ultimately to fulfilment through becoming the person you were created to be. The road is not always smooth, some of the route can be narrow and challenging but the destination is worth it. Pick up your cross and follow where Jesus leads you.