

My friends, if there is one thing the LORD is trying to tell us today in our Gospel reading, it's this: **God cannot be second.** Not in your life. Not in mine. Not in anyone's. And if He *is* second—then everything else, no matter how good it is, no matter how noble, will either be disordered or eventually fall apart.

Christ is not asking for **a** place in your life. He is demanding the **center** of it. And as Christians He has every right to do so.

Let's be honest—this Gospel makes us uncomfortable. We hear Jesus say, "*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,*" and we think, "LORD, that seems harsh."

But listen to me: Christ is not attacking your family. He is protecting them.

Because if God is not first, then every other love in your life becomes disordered. You start asking your spouse, your children, your job, your hobbies to give you what **only God can give**—identity, purpose, salvation.

And they can't do it.

Your family is a gift. But they are not God. They cannot save you.

Only Christ can.

St. Paul tells us in Romans that in Baptism we were *buried* with Christ. Not sprinkled. Not symbolically washed. **Buried.** And if you were buried with Him, then the old you—the selfish you, the lukewarm you, the "God-when-I-have-time-for" you—should be dead and gone. Paul says we must now "*live for God in Christ Jesus.*" Not live for comfort. Not live for convenience. Not live for the world's approval. **Live for God.** My friends, if we truly believed what happened at our Baptism, we would never again treat God like an accessory.

Let's call it what it is.

We give God:

- the leftover minutes of our day,
- the leftover energy of our week,
- the leftover attention after we've scrolled through everything else.

And then we wonder why our lives feel chaotic, empty, anxious.

Brothers and sisters, God should not be squeezed in between errands and entertainment. He cannot be a footnote in your schedule. He will not be second to anything—not even to the good things. Christ is telling us today: "**If I am not first, then you are not living the life I died to give you.**"

Jesus says, *"Whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me."*

Strong words. Notice what He doesn't say. He doesn't say:

- "Take up your comfort."
- "Take up your preferences or what you prefer."
- "Take up your excuses."

No—He says, *"Take up your cross."*

Meaning:

- Do the hard thing, what needs to be done.
- Make the sacrifice.
- Put God first even when it costs you.
- Especially when it costs you.

Because the cross is not our punishment. It is the path to freedom.

And when we do pick up our cross and follow Him, we see that Jesus ends this Gospel reading with hope: *"Whoever gives even a cup of cold water... will surely not lose his reward."*

Why? Because when God is first, even the smallest act becomes holy.

A word of kindness. A moment of patience. A hidden sacrifice. A quiet prayer.

When God is first, nothing is wasted. Everything becomes grace.

So, here's the question— the question that will decide the direction of our lives, the question that will eventually decide the state of our souls:

Is God truly first?

Not in theory. Not in sentiment. Not in the parts of life that are easy. But in your decisions. Your priorities. Your time. Your money. Your relationships. Your habits. Your heart. Because at the end of your life— when you and I stand before the God who made us, who died for us, who rose for us— He will not ask how busy you were. He will ask whether you put Him first.

My friends, Christ is not trying to take anything from you. He is trying to give you everything, but often we get disordered and think that the everything is here and it is not. But He can only do that, give everything, if He is first. So today, let's stop negotiating. Let's stop delaying. Let's stop giving God the leftovers. Let's put Him where He belongs—

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at the center of our lives, the center of our families, the center of our hearts.
Because when God is first, everything else finally falls into place.

Amen. May the LORD bless you and keep you, and make His Face to shine upon you and give you peace.