

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023  
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY  
AFTER PENTECOST



*Following Jesus is not an easy path.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 16:21-28	Take up your cross and follow
Monday	Jeremiah 15:15-21	Jeremiah is reassured
Tuesday	Romans 12:9-21	Rules for Christian living
Wednesday	2 Timothy 4:1-5	Paul's instructions to Timothy
Thursday	Philippians 1:27-30	Live your life in a worthy manner
Friday	1 Corinthians 12:12-26	One body with many members
Saturday	Psalms 26:1-8	Prayer of an innocent person
Sunday	Matthew 18:15-20	Seeking reconciliation

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

**Matthew 16:24 (NRSV)**

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### A Prayer for the Week:

Dear God, help us to pick up our crosses, suffer, and follow Jesus for what is right, just, and loving. Amen.

#### Mealtime Prayer:

Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. Let there be a goodly share on every table, everywhere. Amen.

#### A Blessing to Give:

May the cross of Christ free you to care for all.



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### HYMN OF THE WEEK

*Just a Closer Walk with Thee*



### WEEKLY MILESTONES



Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

### CARING CONVERSATIONS



Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- When is a time you experienced pain or suffering?
- How does your faith in Christ help you when you are in pain or suffering?

### DEVOTIONS



*Read:* Matthew 16:21-28.

In general, we do our best to avoid pain and suffering. Peter wanted Jesus—and himself—to avoid suffering, and so he rebuked Jesus. However, some suffering is necessary in life. There are times when the path in life is not easy. Fighting for justice on behalf of others and God's creation and defending God's mercy and forgiveness when hatred and vengeance is pursued by others are examples of times when suffering is warranted. Peter failed to understand this. Jesus called him out as one who was following the path of evil. The path Jesus chose picks up a cross. Jesus picked up his cross for the salvation of all that God has created. It was a very costly cross for Jesus. It led to torment, false accusations, suffering and death. It is what is referred to as the "theology of the cross," that is, out of suffering God brings healing, new life, and salvation.

*Discuss:* When is a time in your life you avoided the harder path? What happened?

*Pray:* **Compassionate God, give us courage and strength to follow you where truth and justice are needed, to paths that bring healing and hope through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

### SERVICE



Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings for this week, how might you serve by risking your own comfort for the sake of others?

### RITUALS AND TRADITIONS



The cross is a Christian symbol. It reminds us that Jesus is with us through hard times. We see crosses in many places in our lives. As a follower of Jesus, notice the number of crosses you see in your home and in the community this week. Each time you see one, take a moment to pray: **Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross to save us. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)