

**Church of the Ascension, Hilton  
Sunday 20 June 2010**

**Nic Denny-Dimitriou (7am and 9am)**

**Luke 9: 18 – 24**

**From verse 23:**

**“If any want to become my followers...  
Deny yourself, take up your Cross daily and follow me”**

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Start with amusing piece on “Who Jesus really was”  
(Copied at end of these sermon notes)  
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Today: highlight only a few elements of this passage  
Preached on before, can't take up every aspect of it  
But for today...

**We are here this morning because we are followers of Christ**

Many ways in which we follow, many attributes

Duty	[important, but can be “cold” and lifeless]
Loyalty	[duty with some determination, come what may]
Faithfully and with Conviction	[most important, and the others “follow on” naturally]

Brought to faith

Different for everyone

BUT all of us have to have a beginning – birth / baptism (presentation in faith, inclusion into the body of the church – whether the person is given the means to live up to that later or not etc.)

Baptism: Refs to Piet's funeral last week / Baptism service words, esp. “live as a faithful soldier and servant of Christ all the days of your life”

First learnings about faith / experiences of it

### **Continuation points**

Helpful to focus on beginnings – BUT some feel inadequate  
(elaborate...)

“New beginning points” – where we consciously decide to continue with God / go further or deeper, or make a new beginning (God not restricted to time)

Moments of conversion / “Aha moments” when we understand  
Experiences that encourage us more faithfully to follow God

### **“Take up your cross”**

Cross: Prime symbol of Jesus

Symbol of death

Not principally a reference to the trivial “daily grind” (although that may be included in it]

Rather: Death of sinful self (relate to denial of self, as also said by Jesus) and the exchange of our natural self and destructive sinfulness, for new life offered by God in Christ

Faithfulness to the Commands of Jesus

Integrity to God, others and the world around us, and ourselves

### **”Daily”**

Tough word – why did Jesus use it?

Not clear, but presume:

Aware of our need to CHOOSE to live in a particular way, AND to make a regular choice to do so; also, avoiding worrying about “the long haul”, but focusing on what is manageable for today.

Admiration for the addicted person who says, “Just for today, I will stay sober / whatever...” Such a person knows what it is to make a daily choice!

### **Strength for all this?**

Strength comes from God, who gives us grace

Strength comes from others, who support, encourage, teach and mentor us

Strength comes from within us, from our conviction about WHO Jesus is,  
strengthened by friendship and real encounter with God (equally varied,  
sometimes easy, sometimes “silent”)

**For all followers:**

- Seek out God revealed in the Scriptures, presented to us in the person of Jesus
- Seek out the wisdom of others (books, talks, mentors and friendships, people of faith)
- Services and gatherings – the community (worship incl. scripture, teaching, preaching and other forms of input, challenge and encouragement; prayer; study together)

We are ALL followers of the Lord – how adequately, is not for others to decide, not even a priest. It is up to us to work out with God and in community, but not for others to judge or measure

Listen for God, discern God’s call on our lives surrounded by many clattering noises

- This is not something only for the great apostles and heroes of the faith
  - Most of the apostles – historical obscurity, yet still fulfilled God’s purposes as faithful servants of God
  - Most disciples in history – obscurity (it is not about fame)
  - Most of us will also fade into obscurity, however that doesn’t render us useless

What WILL make our lives spiritually useless is to ignore Jesus’ call to come and be his follower

A church’s defining statement of intent, which I once read and noted:  
“Continuing the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply, together”

As followers of Jesus, we also continue the work of Jesus. We aim to be people who listen for the voice of God and who respond by saying: “We are following you, Lord”. We aim to be a community that, in our individual and our parish life, continues the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

Just for today.

And tomorrow? We will decide again!

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**Amusing piece on who Jesus was... (Anon)**

There were 3 good arguments that Jesus was Black:

1. He called everyone brother
2. He liked Gospel
3. He didn't get a fair trial

But then there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was Jewish:

1. He went into His Father's business
2. He lived at home until he was 33
3. He was sure his Mother was a virgin and his Mother was sure He was God

But then there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was Greek:

1. He talked with His hands
2. He had wine with His meals
3. He used olive oil

But then there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was a Californian:

1. He never cut His hair
2. He walked around barefoot all the time
3. He started a new religion

But then there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was an American Indian:

1. He was at peace with nature
2. He ate a lot of fish
3. He talked about the Great Spirit

But then there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was Irish:

1. He never got married.
2. He was always telling stories.
3. He loved green pastures.

But the most compelling evidence of all - 3 proofs that Jesus was a woman:

1. He fed a crowd at a moment's notice when there was virtually no food
  2. He kept trying to get a message across to a bunch of men who just didn't get it
  3. And even when He was dead, He had to get up because there was still work to do
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