

The Things of God

Matthew 16:21-28

1. A choice Jesus laid out in the gospel account:
 - Do I want to commit myself to the things of God?
 - Do I want to commit myself to the things of being human?
2. What is the grand teaching of the Christian movement that we are lifting up today? _____
3. Notes from the preaching of Matthew 16:21-28

4. The Theology of Glory

The Theology of the Cross

5. Everything we do _____.

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HOW TO BECOME A THEOLOGIAN OF THE CROSS (AND AVOID BEING A THEOLOGIAN OF GLORY)

The term *theologian* technically means a student of or specialist in theology. And *theology* is the study of God and God's relationship with humanity and the universe. You may not consider yourself a specialist yet, but you definitely are a student of theology. To do this well, you may wish to follow in the footsteps of Martin Luther, who brought the Christian church away from a misguided "theology of glory" and back to the "theology of the cross."

1. Position the cross in your thinking as an end point, not a starting point. The cross of Jesus Christ is the most important and powerful thing in Christian faith. But it's easy to misunderstand what this means. A "theologian of glory," based on nothing more than individual wishes, tries to use the cross as a starting point for personal gain—to make people healthy and wealthy, successful and popular. A "theologian of the cross," in contrast, thinks of the cross as the last stop for sin, death, and delusions of grandeur. In other words, the cross is an end point.
2. Determine to become a theologian of the cross. The apostle Paul explains this approach: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2).

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3. Identify the marks of the theology of glory and practice contrasting them with the theology of the cross. A theologian of glory might say something like: "Accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior and he will make you happier, richer, and better looking." If things don't pan out, the theologian of glory will say that you need to have greater faith, believe more, or try harder. A theologian of the cross, on the other hand, emphasizes what Jesus did for us. In baptism, Jesus gives you his word, which essentially says, "You are mine," even when you feel troubled, poor, or unattractive.
4. Look for God to reveal himself in the most unexpected places. A theologian of glory thinks that God shows up where humans expect God to show up: in things that are powerful, wise, and important by human standards. On the other hand, the theologian of the cross knows that God is much subtler: God shows up in those things that seem weak, foolish, and insignificant to human eyes. (See 1 Corinthians 1:17-29.)
5. Accept the lifelong nature of becoming a theologian of the cross. In the end, being a theologian of the cross is something that can't be taught from a book. There's no class you can take or diploma you can get that certifies you as a theologian of the cross. As you experience life's ups and downs, being a theologian of the cross is something you just live into when you are open and trust God's promises.

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