

# Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August 2026

## Bible Readings

### **Romans 12:9–21 NRSV**

[9] Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; [10] love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. [11] Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. [12] Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. [13] Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. [14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. [15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. [16] Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. [17] Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. [18] If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. [19] Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." [20] No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." [21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### **Matthew 16:21–28 NRSV**

[21] 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. [22] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." [23] 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." [24] Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. [25] For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. [26] 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? [27] "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. [28] 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."

## **Questions**

1. What does Paul mean when he says, "Let love be genuine" in Romans 12:9?
2. What does Romans 12:10–13 teach us about relationships within the Christian community?
3. What does Paul mean by "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15)?

4. How should Christians respond to people who hurt or oppose them?
5. What does Paul mean by “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21)?
6. Why does Peter react so strongly when Jesus predicts his suffering and death?
7. Why does Jesus say to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan”?
8. What does Jesus mean by “deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”?
9. What does Jesus mean when he says, “Those who lose their life for my sake will find it”?
10. What is the main theological connection between Romans 12:9–21 and Matthew 16:21–28?

Extra:

- Q11. How does the cross of Christ shape Paul’s understanding of genuine Christian love?
- Q12. What do these passages teach about evil, suffering and Christian non-retaliation?
- Q13. What does Jesus mean when he says we must lose our lives in order to find them, and how does this relate to Christian sanctification?

## **Reflection**

### **A Love That Takes Up the Cross**

***Romans 12:9–21 and Matthew 16:21–28***

These two passages challenge us to think about what it really means to follow Jesus. It is easy to speak about Christian love when life is going well and when the people around us are easy to love. Jesus and Paul take us deeper. They show us that Christian love can be costly.

In Matthew 16, Peter has just declared that Jesus is the Messiah. Yet when Jesus explains that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer, die and be raised again, Peter cannot accept it. He wants a Messiah of victory and strength, not suffering and sacrifice. Jesus challenges Peter because Peter has recognised who Jesus is, but he has not yet understood what kind of Messiah Jesus is.

Jesus then turns to all his disciples and says: **“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”**

Taking up our cross does not mean that Christians should deliberately seek suffering or accept harmful treatment. Rather, Jesus calls us to place God at the centre of our lives instead of ourselves. Following him may sometimes require sacrifice, courage and difficult choices.

Romans 12 helps us understand what this cross-shaped life looks like in everyday situations. Paul begins: **“Let love be genuine.”**

Genuine Christian love is more than warm feelings. It is demonstrated through our actions. Paul tells us to honour others, serve enthusiastically, remain hopeful, persevere through difficulties, pray faithfully, help those in need and practise hospitality. But then Paul makes the challenge even harder: **“Bless those who persecute you.”** And later: **“Do not repay anyone evil for evil.”**

This goes against our natural instinct. When someone hurts us, we may want to hurt them in return. When someone criticises us, we may want to defend ourselves or respond angrily. Paul offers another way: **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

This does not mean ignoring wrongdoing. Christians can challenge injustice, establish healthy boundaries and protect those who are vulnerable. Forgiveness does not mean pretending that something harmful was acceptable. Instead, Paul challenges us not to allow another person's wrongdoing to determine the kind of person we become. We resist evil without allowing hatred and revenge to take control of us.

This is where Romans and Matthew come together. Jesus does not merely tell us about self-giving love. He lives it. The journey towards Jerusalem will eventually lead to the cross, where Christ demonstrates the depth of God's love for humanity. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to allow that same love gradually to transform us. Taking up our cross may therefore happen through very ordinary choices: forgiving when we would rather remain angry, listening when we would rather speak, giving when we would rather keep, welcoming someone who feels excluded, or responding with kindness when someone has treated us badly.

None of this earns God's love. We live this way because God has already loved us in Christ. Christian discipleship is therefore not simply believing certain things about Jesus. It is allowing the love revealed in Jesus to reshape the way we live.

## **Questions for Personal Reflection**

1. Where in my life might Jesus be asking me to put aside my own wishes or pride in order to follow him more faithfully?
2. Is there a situation where anger, resentment or the desire for revenge is beginning to control me? What might it mean to “overcome evil with good”?

3. What practical act of genuine Christian love—encouragement, generosity, hospitality, forgiveness or service—could I offer someone this week?