

No Cross, No Crown

Closing Remarks for Choir Presentation

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A lot of people were interested in Jesus initially. Everyone likes a winner. Everyone likes hanging around someone who makes things exciting. Jesus caused quite a stir. He had the opportunity to take the crown after He fed the 5000. A large crowd of people sat listening to His teaching. But it was near the end of the day and they were hungry. Jesus took a boys lunch of 5 little loaves of bread and 2 fishes. He blessed it and multiplied it many times over.

The crowd figured out what had happened. The Bible tells us they wanted to take him by force and make Him King. But Jesus dismissed the crowd. Can you imagine how much inner strength and character it took to dismiss a crowd that wants to make you their king? But Jesus would not let them for He knew it was not God's way.

This was not the first time such an opportunity presented itself. At the very beginning of His ministry, we are told that Jesus went into the desert to be tempted by the devil. One of the temptations consisted of Satan showing Jesus the kingdoms of the world. Satan says that he will give Jesus the crown over all these kingdoms if only he would bow down and worship Satan. But Jesus said "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

Even Jesus' own disciples wanted Jesus to take the crown before the cross. They kept asking when He would restore Israel as a kingdom. They argued about who would be the greatest in His kingdom. They jostled for the positions of most influence when He finally took the throne.

Then there was Gethsemane. The horror of the cross pushed down upon Him with crushing intensity. "Father, if it is possible please take this cup from me!" Yet even at His weakest, Jesus refused to grab hold of the crown prematurely before going to the cross.

But after the cross, everything was different. God exalted Jesus to the Highest Place. God gave Him the name above every name. Now He reigns over the universe though a majority of people don't recognize Him as their King. One day He will return and those who were faithful will enter into His eternal kingdom. Those who didn't will mourn over their negligence.

Yet until then, how are we to live? We have to admit our own desires to get crowns without crosses. There have been times when we've been offered a crown 'that bypasses the cross' required to obtain them. Maybe we've taken

shortcuts thinking that we can get the crown without the cross. But God's way is to give crowns after crosses. God calls His people to go through a cross formed process where we die to ourselves and are raised to new Christ like life. That process is not accomplished in 3 easy steps over 10 minutes. It takes a lifetime – our lifetimes.

Yet, the Scriptures promise the possibility of multiple crowns in eternity. The crown of life; the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory. Yet these crowns will not be the Christians ultimate treasure. That will be Christ Himself and seeing Him face to face – the King of kings and Lord of lords – who reigns over the universe yet loves us like a shepherd.

What cross is Jesus calling you to carry at this time? What temptation might you face today that invites a shortcut to the best He has for you? Though it is difficult to continue with the cross-formed life, it is ultimately the best way – God's way. It's the way that brought salvation to the world and to us. It is the way we will be shaped to become the people God intended us to be. No Cross. No Crown. But a carried cross leads to an eternal crown. May Jesus who purchased this path for us, empower us to persevere in the cross-formed life.