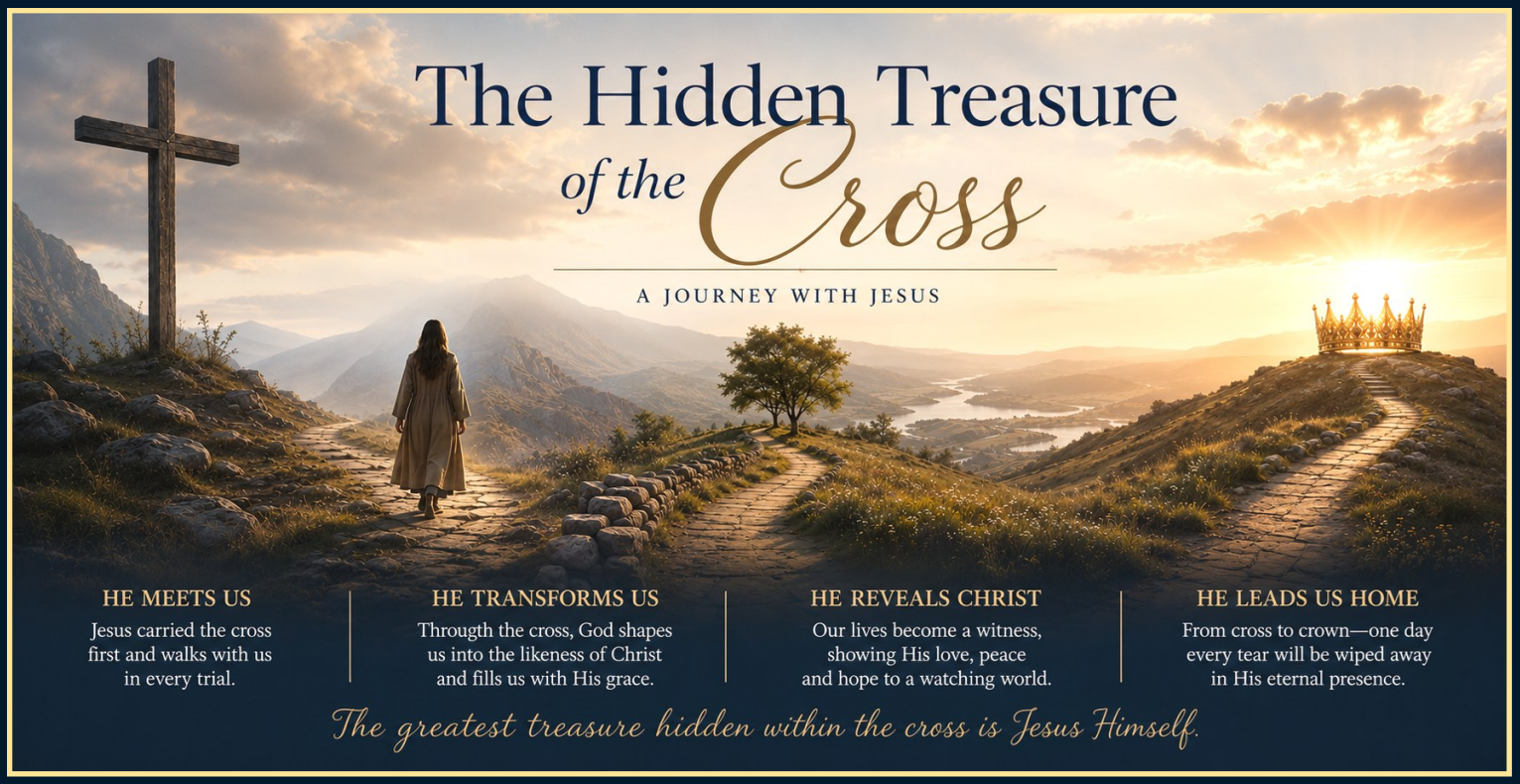


Dear Friends,

Sooner or later, every follower of Jesus discovers that the pathway of discipleship includes roads we would never have chosen for ourselves. A prolonged illness, the loss of someone we love, family heartache, financial uncertainty, disappointment, rejection, or simply the weariness of living in a broken world can suddenly become part of our journey. None of us seeks these burdens, and our first instinct is often to ask God to remove them.

There is nothing wrong with that prayer. Suffering was never part of God's original design. He created us for fellowship with Himself, not for pain, sorrow or death. It was through sin that suffering entered the world, leaving its mark on every generation. We see its effects everywhere—in broken relationships, troubled hearts, failing bodies and a creation that longs for the day when Jesus will make all things new.

Yet in the midst of this brokenness, the Scriptures reveal a hope that the world cannot understand. Although suffering is never good in itself, God never allows the life of His children to be governed by chance. In His sovereign love, He is able to take even the hardest circumstances and weave them into His gracious purposes. What seems to us a place of loss can become a place of unexpected blessing. What feels like a heavy cross can become the very place where we discover Jesus more deeply than ever before.

This is the hidden treasure of the cross.

It is not found in suffering itself, nor in pretending that pain does not hurt. Jesus never asked us to love suffering, and He certainly never glorified it. Throughout His earthly ministry He healed the sick, comforted the grieving, welcomed the weary and was moved with compassion towards all who suffered. Jesus understands every tear because He has shed tears Himself.

Yet Jesus also spoke words that continue to challenge every generation of believers: *"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me."* (Luke 9:23)

Before He ever asked us to carry a cross, He carried one Himself. Every step towards Calvary was taken in love. He willingly endured rejection, betrayal, humiliation and unimaginable suffering so that we might be reconciled to the Father. The cross was not an interruption to His mission but the very means by which God's redeeming love was revealed to the world. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus conquered sin, defeated death and opened the way for us to receive eternal life.

Because He walked this road first, we never carry our cross alone. When Jesus asks us to trust Him in difficult seasons, He is not leading us along an unfamiliar path. He walks beside us as the One who knows suffering from within. He understands our fears, our questions and our weakness. More than that, He promises to meet us in the very places where we feel most helpless.

Perhaps this is the mystery we are slow to recognise. The cross we long to escape may become the place where we come to know Jesus most intimately. As every earthly support is stripped away, we begin to discover that His grace truly is sufficient, His presence is enough, and His love never fails.

This is the hidden treasure waiting to be discovered—not that suffering becomes easier, but that through it we come to know Jesus more deeply, trust Him more completely, and experience the faithfulness of the One who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

The Treasure Hidden Within the Cross

When life is unfolding as we had hoped, it is easy to become occupied with our plans, our responsibilities and the demands of each day. Although we continue to love the Lord, we can quietly begin to rely upon our own strength. Our prayers become more routine, our dependence less conscious, and our awareness of His daily presence less keen.

Then life changes. A diagnosis is given. A relationship breaks down. A door closes unexpectedly. A dream comes to an end. Suddenly we find ourselves standing on unfamiliar ground, and almost instinctively our hearts turn towards heaven.

We realise afresh that Jesus is not merely Someone we believe in—He is the One upon whom our lives depend.

This is often where the hidden treasure begins to emerge. Jesus gently loosens our grip on the things that can never truly satisfy, so that we may hold more firmly to the One who never changes. The securities we once depended upon begin to fade, while the presence of Jesus becomes increasingly precious. We discover that our deepest hope is not found in favourable circumstances, but in the unchanging love of Jesus.

Paul understood this better than most. No one embraced suffering for its own sake, yet Paul discovered that the hardest seasons of his life became the places where he knew Jesus most deeply. He expressed this longing when he wrote:

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings." (Philippians 3:10)

Paul was not glorifying suffering. He was describing the profound fellowship that can be found with Jesus when every other support has been stripped away. There are aspects of Jesus' faithfulness, tenderness and sustaining grace that are often learned most deeply in life's darkest valleys.

Many believers have discovered this for themselves. There are seasons when the Scriptures seem to come alive in entirely new ways. Passages that were once familiar suddenly become personal. Promises we have read for years become the anchor that steadies our hearts. We find ourselves praying more honestly, listening more carefully and depending more completely upon Jesus.

Without realising it, we are being changed. Scripture tells us that God is transforming His children into the likeness of His Son. This work is seldom dramatic or instantaneous. More often it is quiet, patient and unseen. Like a master craftsman shaping a precious work of art, our heavenly Father faithfully removes what does not belong so that the beauty of Jesus may shine more clearly through our lives.

This refining work is not a sign of God's displeasure but of His loving care. A wise gardener prunes the branches not to harm the vine, but so that it may bear more fruit. In the same way, our heavenly Father is committed to producing within us the character of His Son.

The qualities we admire most in mature believers rarely develop overnight. Humility, patience, gentleness, compassion and steadfast faith are usually formed over many years of walking with Jesus through both joy and sorrow. These graces are not the result of human determination, but of the Holy Spirit's faithful work within surrendered hearts.

How often our first question in suffering is, "Lord, why is this happening?" Yet perhaps a better question is, "Lord, what are You teaching me about Yourself?"

That simple change in perspective can transform the way we walk through trials. Instead of seeing every difficulty as an interruption to God's plan, we begin to recognise that He is at work even when we cannot yet understand His purposes. Our circumstances may remain the same, but our hearts are gradually being changed.

This does not mean we stop praying for healing, provision or deliverance. The Father delights to hear the cries of His children, and throughout the Gospels we see His deep compassion for those who suffered. We are always invited to bring our needs before Him with faith and confidence.

Yet sometimes His greatest miracle is not changing our circumstances but sustaining us within them.

Paul experienced this when he pleaded for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh." The Lord answered him, not by removing the burden, but by giving him a promise that has strengthened believers throughout the centuries:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Those words reveal the true nature of God's grace. Grace is not merely His forgiveness for our sins; it is His strength given to us each day. It is His presence when the road is difficult, His peace when answers seem delayed, and His assurance that we are never left to walk alone.

Many who have travelled difficult roads would testify that, although they would never choose those experiences again, neither would they exchange what they came to know of Jesus through them. In the places where they felt weakest, they discovered His strength. In the seasons when they felt most alone, they found His companionship. When every other support was taken away, Jesus Himself became enough.

Perhaps that is the greatest treasure hidden within the cross.

Jesus does not delight in our suffering, but neither does He waste it. Every surrendered trial becomes another opportunity for us to know Jesus more deeply. As our dependence upon Him grows, so does our confidence in His faithfulness. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the image of Jesus is formed within us.

And there is no greater treasure than that.

The Cross That Reveals Christ

The work God accomplishes through the cross is never intended to end with us. As we learn to trust Jesus more deeply, our lives become a living testimony to His grace.

We often think that our greatest witness is found in what we say. While we are certainly called to proclaim the Gospel, there are times when the clearest testimony is seen rather than heard. A life that quietly reflects the peace, humility and steadfastness of Jesus speaks with a power that words alone cannot achieve.

The world understands confidence when life is going well. It expects people to rejoice when they are healthy, secure and successful. What it struggles to explain is the peace of someone who continues to trust Jesus through grief, illness, disappointment or uncertainty.

Such peace is not natural. It is the fruit of a life hidden in Jesus.

As we surrender our burdens to Him, something beautiful begins to happen. His gentleness softens our hearts. His patience becomes our strength. His compassion grows within us. Instead of becoming bitter through suffering, we become more gracious.

Instead of living for ourselves, we become more attentive to the needs of others. The very trials that could have hardened our hearts become the means by which Jesus' love is more clearly seen.

This is one of the Lord's wonderful ways. He does not simply comfort us in our suffering; He transforms us so that we can comfort others. Those who have experienced His faithfulness are often the ones best able to encourage those who are walking through similar valleys. Having discovered the tenderness of Jesus for themselves, they become channels of that same tenderness to others.

Paul wrote that God "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4). What a beautiful picture of the Christian life. The comfort we receive is never meant to stop with us. It overflows into the lives of others.

This is why God never wastes a surrendered cross. Every trial entrusted to Him becomes an opportunity for His grace to be displayed. Sometimes He reveals His power through miraculous deliverance. At other times He reveals it by sustaining His children with extraordinary peace when circumstances remain unchanged. Both testify to His faithfulness. Both reveal His glory.

History is filled with believers whose lives have shone most brightly in seasons of hardship. Their witness did not come because they possessed exceptional strength, but because they learned to depend upon Jesus. When their own resources failed, His sufficiency became unmistakably clear.

The same is true today.

Many people may never read a Bible before they first read the life of a Christian. They watch how we respond when our plans are disrupted, when our prayers seem delayed, or when suffering enters our homes. They notice whether we cling to bitterness or choose forgiveness, whether fear overwhelms us or hope remains steadfast.

When Jesus is seen in us during such seasons, our lives quietly proclaim the reality of the Gospel.

None of this means we pretend that suffering does not hurt. Faith is never a denial of reality. Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus, even though He knew resurrection was only moments away. He understands our grief because He has entered fully into the sorrow of this fallen world.

Biblical faith does not ignore pain; it brings pain into the presence of God. It is able to say, "Father, I do not understand why this has happened, but I know Your heart. You have already proved Your love for me at Calvary, and therefore I choose to trust You."

That is the confidence the cross gives us.

Because of the cross, we know that God's love is beyond question. Whatever we may not understand about our present circumstances, we can never doubt the love that led the Son of God to lay down His life for us. Calvary is God's eternal declaration that His purposes towards His children are always rooted in perfect love.

This assurance enables us to live with hope.

We do not know what tomorrow will bring, but we know who walks with us.

We may not understand every twist in the road, but we know that the Shepherd never loses sight of His sheep. He is faithfully leading us, even when the path disappears into the shadows.

One day we will look back and see that every step was guided by His loving hand. We will understand how He used each surrendered burden to draw us closer to Himself, to shape us into His likeness, and to touch the lives of others in ways we could never have imagined.

Until then, we continue to follow Jesus with quiet confidence. We entrust our unanswered questions to Him, knowing that the One who carried the cross before us will never fail to complete the work He has begun in us.

The hidden treasure of the cross is not merely that Jesus changes our circumstances, nor even that He changes us. It is that, through every season of life, He gives us more of Himself. And as we know Him more deeply, His life shines more brightly through ours, drawing others to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us.

From Cross to Crown

As we journey with Jesus, we gradually discover that the cross is not merely something to be endured until life becomes easier. In the hands of our loving Saviour, it becomes a place of deeper fellowship, transforming grace and growing hope.

The Christian life has never been a promise of an easy road. Jesus never concealed the cost of following Him. Yet He also never asked us to walk a path that He had not first walked Himself. The One who carried the cross to Calvary now walks beside us, strengthening us with His presence and leading us with unfailing love.

This is our confidence.

Our hope does not rest in our ability to endure suffering, but in the faithfulness of the One who has promised, "I am with you always." Whether He chooses to remove our burden or give us grace to carry it, He remains the same yesterday, today and forever. His love never changes, His wisdom never fails, and His purposes for His children are always good.

There are many things we do not yet understand. We cannot always see why one prayer is answered quickly while another seems to remain unanswered. We do not know why some burdens are lifted and others continue for many years. Yet we know enough to trust the heart of God. At Calvary, He settled forever the question of His love for us. The cross stands as His eternal declaration that He will withhold no good thing from those who belong to Him.

Because of that assurance, we can walk by faith even when we cannot walk by sight.

The day is coming when every burden will be laid down. Every tear will be wiped away. Sickness, sorrow, disappointment and death will have no place in Christ's eternal kingdom. Faith will become sight, and we shall stand in the presence of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Then we will understand what we can only glimpse today.

We will see how the Lord used every surrendered trial to deepen our love for Him.

We will recognise how seasons of waiting strengthened our faith, how disappointments protected us from paths that were not His best, and how quiet acts of obedience bore fruit far beyond anything we could see.

Above all, we will see Jesus in all His glory and discover that He Himself was the greatest treasure hidden within every cross we carried for His sake.

Until that day, let us not lose heart. Whatever cross you are carrying today, remember that you do not carry it alone. Jesus walks beside you. He knows your weakness, understands your tears and will never forsake you. As you continue to place your hand into His, you will find that His grace is sufficient for every step of the journey and His strength is made perfect in your weakness.

One day, the cross will give way to the crown.

The journey of faith will end in the presence of our risen Lord, where every sorrow will be swallowed up in joy, every question answered by His wisdom, and every wound healed by His love. Until that glorious day, may we keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, trusting that even when we cannot understand His ways, we can always trust His heart.

For the greatest treasure hidden within the cross is not the end of our suffering, but the privilege of knowing Jesus more deeply, becoming more like Him, and one day seeing Him face to face.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the immeasurable love You have shown us through Your Son, Jesus.. Thank You that when we were lost, He willingly took up the cross so that we might be forgiven, restored and brought into the joy of Your presence.

Lord Jesus, we confess that we often shrink back from the crosses that come into our lives. We long for easier paths and quick answers, yet You lovingly remind us that You are always with us, even in the valleys we would never have chosen.

Teach us to trust Your heart when we cannot understand Your ways. Help us to see that our greatest treasure is not found in a life free from suffering, but in knowing You more deeply. May every trial draw us closer to You, every burden deepen our dependence upon You, and every step of our journey reveal more of Your grace and faithfulness.

By Your Holy Spirit, transform us into Your likeness. Replace fear with faith, anxiety with peace, self-reliance with quiet dependence, and discouragement with hope. Let our lives reflect Your humility, compassion and steadfast love, so that others may see Christ in us and be drawn to You.

Keep our eyes fixed on the glorious hope that lies before us. Thank You that one day every tear will be wiped away, every burden laid down, and we shall see You face to face. Until that day, strengthen us to walk faithfully, to trust You wholeheartedly, and to follow wherever You lead.

May we never forget that the greatest treasure hidden within every surrendered cross is the privilege of knowing You more intimately and becoming more like You.

We ask this in the precious and victorious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Thank you for your prayers, friendship and support.
May God bless each one of you abundantly

The Evangelical Sisters of Mary

The Road of True Discipleship

Verse 1

You have called us, Lord, to follow,
Not the easy, pleasant way;
But to walk the road of Calvary,
Learning trust from day to day.
Not by moments of emotion,
Nor by all that we can see,
But by taking up our crosses,
Walking close behind our King.

Chorus

This is the road of true discipleship,
Walking where our Saviour trod.
Dying daily to our own will,
Yielding all our lives to God.
Through the valleys You will lead us,
Till Your image we display;
For the cross is where You shape us
As we walk Your narrow way.

Verse 2

When the journey brings us sorrow,
When our strength is almost gone,
Still Your voice calls, "Keep on following;
I am with you all along."
Every trial, every burden,
Every cross we choose to bear,
Draws us deeper into Jesus,
Teaching us His heart to share.

Bridge

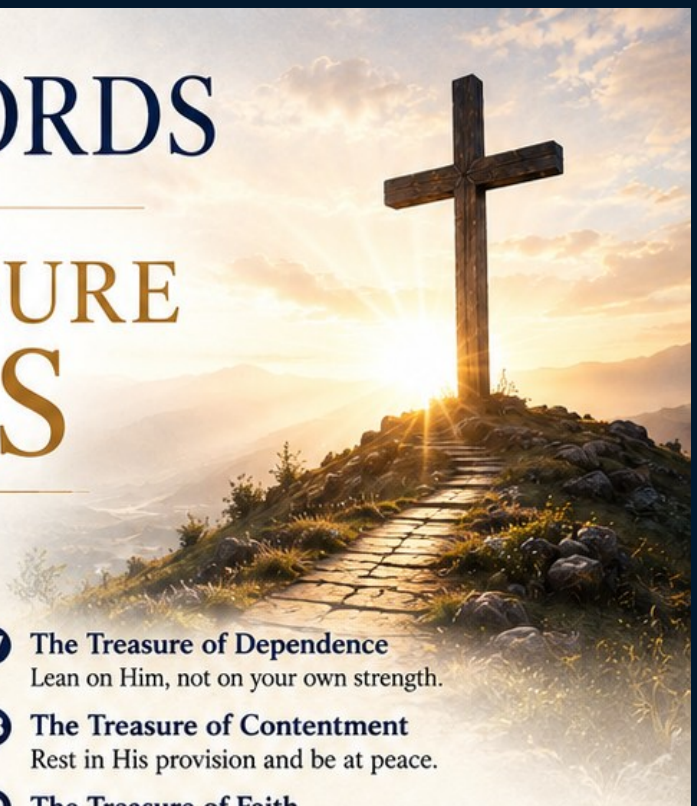
Not by signs and not by wonders,
Not by feelings passing by;
But by faithful, daily dying,
Living only by Your life.
Shape within us, blessed Jesus,
All Your gentleness and grace,
Till the beauty of Your likeness
Shines within us face to face.

Final Chorus

This is the road of true discipleship,
Walking where our Saviour trod.
Through the cross You are preparing
Hearts that wholly belong to God.
Till our journey ends in glory,
And before Your throne we stand;
Every cross will tell the story
Of the Shepherd's faithful hand.

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31 WATCHWORDS FOR THE HIDDEN TREASURE of the CROSS



A 31-DAY JOURNEY OF DISCOVERING
THE GREATEST TREASURE OF ALL — JESUS.

1. **The Treasure of Surrender**
   Lay down your will and follow His.
2. **The Treasure of Trust**
   Trust His heart, even when you don't understand.
3. **The Treasure of Weakness**
   In weakness, His strength is made perfect.
4. **The Treasure of Waiting**
   God's timing is always best.
5. **The Treasure of Obedience**
   Obedience opens the door to His blessing.
6. **The Treasure of Humility**
   Humility draws you closer to Jesus.
7. **The Treasure of Grace**
   His grace is enough for every day.
8. **The Treasure of Faithfulness**
   He is faithful, and so we are called to be.
9. **The Treasure of Perseverance**
   Keep following, the reward is sure.
10. **The Treasure of Prayer**
    Prayer keeps you in fellowship with Him.
11. **The Treasure of Silence**
    In stillness, His presence speaks.
12. **The Treasure of Hope**
    Hope anchors your soul in every storm.
13. **The Treasure of Peace**
    His peace guards your heart and mind.
14. **The Treasure of Compassion**
    Love others with Christ's love.
15. **The Treasure of Forgiveness**
    Forgive as you have been forgiven.
16. **The Treasure of Self-Denial**
    Deny yourself and take up your cross daily.
17. **The Treasure of Dependence**
    Lean on Him, not on your own strength.
18. **The Treasure of Contentment**
    Rest in His provision and be at peace.
19. **The Treasure of Faith**
    Faith sees what is unseen.
20. **The Treasure of Love**
    Love is the mark of a true disciple.
21. **The Treasure of God's Presence**
    He is always with you.
22. **The Treasure of His Word**
    His Word is a lamp to your path.
23. **The Treasure of His Will**
    Seek His will in all you do.
24. **The Treasure of His Strength**
    His strength is made perfect in you.
25. **The Treasure of His Comfort**
    He comforts you in every sorrow.
26. **The Treasure of His Cross**
    The cross is the place of life.
27. **The Treasure of Transformation**
    He shapes you into His likeness.
28. **The Treasure of Fellowship with Jesus**
    Walk closely with Him each day.
29. **The Treasure of Eternal Hope**
    Your home is in heaven.
30. **The Treasure of Resurrection**
    Because He lives, we have hope.
31. **The Greatest Treasure — Jesus**
    The cross reveals the greatest treasure of all—Jesus Himself.

Keep your eyes on Jesus,
the hidden treasure of the cross.

HE CALLS. HE WALKS WITH YOU. HE TRANSFORMS YOU. HE IS YOUR TREASURE.