

Good news, bad news. Bad news first. That's the structure of Jesus's conversation in the gospel. Now speakers choose to give bad news first when they have good news so good that it softens or cancels out the bad news – and Jesus had such good news. But the bad news was so bad, the apostles couldn't hear the good news.

Bad news first: Jesus will suffer and die, and that will be the same lot for those who follow him. They must take up their cross and give up a self-centered life for the sake of others. They not only have to hear the bad news, they have to live the bad news.

Then Jesus gives the disciples the good news ... really the best news possible: his disciples who let go of selfish living and live for others will share in Jesus's risen life, eternal life.

But the disciples don't hear this good news, because they're still stuck on the bad news they just heard, about the cost of discipleship. This isn't what they signed up for. They wanted smooth sailing. They expected a powerful *Messiah* who'd crush the Romans and give them a privileged place in the new Israel.

So Peter speaks up for all of them; they have different plans for Jesus. And Jesus calls him out: he says this is God's plan to save the world, God's saving mission for me. My death, sacrificing my life, will make up for all the sins of history – past, present and future. Don't tempt me to avoid this; don't be like Satan who tried the same thing on me 3 times in the desert, at the start of my ministry. Don't be a stumbling block, an obstacle to my mission. Forget your plan for me; God doesn't think like you do. Get behind me ... meaning: follow me, let go of your self-seeking life, and live for God's will, which is to live to help others.

That's why Paul tells us in the Second Reading to give our lives as a living sacrifice to God, to lead our lives in a way that pleases him, by sharing with others the gifts, talents and time God has given us, by showing hospitality, by giving forgiveness. It's not about what I want, it's what God wants me to do. And God wants us to be generously loving, like he is, to give ourselves away for others, to let go of our strong desires for self-indulgence, for pleasure. That's what so much of TV, movies and advertising are about; that's what they're selling. God wants us to refuse to go along with those messages that bombard us every day. Instead, act according to what's best for someone else, not what's best for me, whether it's against popular opinion, or our political party's beliefs.

Good news, bad news, bad news first. That's life! That's reality! We don't get a trouble-free life because we're Christians. That often doesn't sink in. More likely, when many don't get what they prayed for, when they don't get what they want, they get angry at God, they give up on God, they stop the conversation, the prayer, they stop worshipping him, they cut him out of their lives.

Now sometimes other people cause us bad news. There are times when someone wants us to violate our conscience that tells what is the right thing for us to do. So they flatter us, or pressure us – they tell us: don't make waves; or they threaten us, insult us or reject us; or they call us unpatriotic.

However the bad news comes to us, we often don't hear the good news: that we're part of God's plan, that he'll make good out of our loss, that he has something better in mind. He's planned a great future for us. The good news is our future resurrection – and the good news is also for right

now: when we experience bad news, God works immediately to make tremendous good for us out of it. God is always with us when we get the bad news. And God won't let it end there.

Good news, bad news, bad news first. That's life. That's reality. We don't have to seek out bad news – it will find us. Let's just not get stuck there, like the disciples did. Let's not forget the good news! Let's let go of a lifestyle where we just care for ourselves, and then we'll have resurrection and live in God's peace forever.

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