**Matthew 16:24-26 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**

Name it and claim it. Now, those who believe this teaching don’t call it this… they call it Word of Faith teaching. We don’t have to look very far to find a pastor who is teaching this kind of theology. We see pastors on TV, hear them on the radio and internet, and see their books lining the shelves – Joyce Meyer, Joel Olsteen, Creflo Dollar. It’s the Prosperity Gospel, and many associate it with money only, but it applies to health, relationships, and any area where we can take a promise of God that is meant to be good and twist it to serve our purposes. It tickles the ears of those who want to hear. People cheer and shout amen because they want to believe. They love this because it places them in control, but it is not of God… It is of Satan. It is a recipe for doubt, discouragement, and disillusionment. It is of this world, it’s not Biblical, and it has caused millions to question their faith and question their relationship with God.

When the name it and claim it crowd in on the prowl, they take scripture out of context and claim that God is confirming in scripture what they are professing in message. Matthew 17:20 is one *- So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.* Creflo Dollar will say that, when we ask of Jesus money or health or passing of a bad situation, that if we only believe, we will receive. But we all remember the context of this scripture – the disciples have encountered a demon that they cannot cast out. The father is desperate, but Jesus talks of a Faithless generation. This scripture doesn’t promise that God will be our magic lamp for all our heart desires. It promises that He will work His will in our lives no matter what the circumstances when we approach Him with Faith. But it is in accordance with His will.

In our scripture tonight, we read *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.* Let him deny himself. Deny is not the same as enrich. Jesus says several things clearly – first, we must have a heart desire to follow Him. Second, we must deny self – self is anything that the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life call on our worldly self to want. Denying self fits inside desiring Jesus – we cannot desire to follow Jesus and desire to follow self. They are mutually exclusive. When we love God, we hate the world. But, after the desire is determined, we must take up His teachings and commandments and follow. When Jesus encountered the rich young ruler, the young man went away sad because he possessed many things. He was unwilling to desire Jesus more than desiring self.

And so it is with many today. The name it and claim it false teaching says that we need not deny our selfish wants and desires. People love to hear that! You mean I can have eternal life and never sacrifice one single thing for Jesus! I can feed my appetites for worldly lusts and believe I have a heavenly home waiting! They sign on quickly because it appeals to self. When I deny self, spirit is filled and grows. When I deny spirit, spirit shrinks and self grows. It’s up to me which I choose to deny.

In 1 John 5:14-15 we read *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.* This is another verse that the name it and claim it crowd uses. I’ve heard of pastors praying over a cancer patient and then telling the family that, if they believe and claim it, the cancer will disappear and be cured. I’ve had people quote this verse to me when they speak of disappointment or frustration with a bad situation. I’ve had more than one say it must be their faith that’s the problem. But, let’s focus on what is most important in this scripture and most important in all things that are of God – it’s not the “if we ask anything”, but the “according to His will”. We must pray in accordance with God’s will. Nevertheless, Your will oh God and not mine be done! We leave it to the Master to know what needs to happen and we believe that our petition of God’s Kingdom come and His will be done will be heard and executed on earth as it is in heaven.

That doesn’t sound very much like name it and claim it. It’s not what the world likes to hear. It places God in control and places us as His servant. It places Him as Creator and us as created. It returns our focus on Him as High and Holy, and returns us to meek and lowly. It demands we deny self and desire Spirit.

Verse 25 of our scripture says - *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*We’re faced again with a mutually exclusive decision. Work to possess, loving the world, we are in danger of rejecting eternal life. Work to serve Jesus and gain eternal life, as well as true meaning in earthly life. But we must do it for His sake – we must deny self – we must do according to God’s will. The scripture is clear. It’s our mind that’s not.

Matthew 7:7-11 7 *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!* This is another favorite of the Name It crowd. But recall that in verse 13 – just two verses later – Jesus speaks of the Narrow and Wide way. He warns us that narrow and difficult is the way that leads to eternal life and few find it.

Verse 26 *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* It really doesn’t get any clearer than these words. The world, even the whole world, is worth nothing in comparison to our eternal soul. Those who pursue riches night and day to the exclusion of the soul, those who pursue youth or health or love to the exclusion of bearing the cross that Jesus calls us to bear will have an eternity in Hell to consider the question – what did I exchange for my soul? Solomon said Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. This world is a wisp, a whisper, a vapor. Like fog disappearing on a bright sunny morning.

Name it and claim it promotes greed and self centeredness. It denies the message of the Gospel. It promotes enrichment of self. It is sin and we must deny that sin by shining the light of Truth on it clearly. 1 Timothy 6:10 says *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* Pierced themselves through for the love of money.

Let’s hear the end of it Romans 14:17 *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* In fact in Matthew 13:44 we learn that Jesus is the treasure - *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.* The man denied himself, because he’d found his true desire. He took up the cross and followed with all he possessed. Jesus says deny and follow. We must make our decision daily.