



St John Lutheran Church

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Matthew 16:21-26

Peter Gets It Wrong

Be careful, dear friends, and learn: Peter gets it wrong. Last week, he was so, so right...the first to declare to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus declared him "blessed," because this awesome confession of faith was given to him by God. **This week, Jesus doesn't call Peter "blessed."** He calls him **"Satan."** Peter's gotten it very wrong indeed.

Up to now, Jesus has been preparing His disciples for what He is about to say. **He has been** teaching His Word and performing miracles. **The evidence is** compelling, and Peter has rightly determined who He is: **Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God."** **The disciples have** figured out the "who" and the "what" of Jesus... **now He** will tell them the "where," the "why" and the "how: " **From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day"** (16:21).

Now, for you and me, this is old news... **but this** is the first the disciples have heard of it. **There's barely been** any opposition to Jesus so far... **It's mostly been** a time of teaching and wonderful works. **Now, Jesus announces** His suffering and death. **How will the** disciples react?

It's not going to happen... **not if** Peter has anything to say about it. **It's up to** him to save the Savior... **as a friend** and disciple, he's got to get Jesus to knock off the crazy talk. **He pulls Jesus** aside to do just that: **"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"**

Without a doubt, Peter is greatly concerned for Jesus and doesn't want Him to die. **No one can** doubt that Peter is acting on the best of intentions... **which is** why the rebuke is so stinging: **"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but of men."** **It probably leaves** Peter speechless. **How could Jesus** rebuke Peter... **call him** the devil, no less...**just for** wanting what he thinks is best for Him?

Because, no matter Peter's reason or intentions, **Peter's sin** is the worst of evil. **Jesus' prophecy** of His death is not some crazy talk... **but the Father's Will and Promise... long ago,** made to Adam and Eve, when God declared that the Savior would crush Satan's head and suffer Himself in the process (Gen. 3:15). **It is the Will** of God that His Son go to the cross and die for the sins of the world.

So when Peter contradicts Jesus... **even with** the best of intentions... **he is saying,** "Lord, not Thy will, but mine be done. I know better than You, and Your way will never be." **When Peter challenges** Jesus, he is saying that Jesus is wrong and that the Word of God which He speaks is false.

Put it this way... **When Peter acts** to prevent Jesus from going to that cross... **he is actively** trying to prevent the redemption of the world. **He is blocking** the way to the cross. **He is attempting** to keep you from being forgiven for all of your sins. **No wonder Jesus** calls Peter **"Satan:"** **This is exactly what the devil desires.**

Peter is doing the devil's work... **because Peter** is following a most dangerous false god...**himself.** **This is what** happens when we do and say what we think is right with regard to Scriptural teachings. **When we don't** listen to what God has to say...**what God** wants and what He teaches. **And please notice** this false teaching...**this errant** action is from Peter... **not some** distant unknown teacher...**but Peter. One of the 12...one**

who would later die for the Gospel. **This errant teaching** came from the mind of a man who was in the Church...**who would** become a great teacher and preacher of the Church. **One who had** just made the very confession of the Church! **The sinful self** is bad enough, **because it daily** wants to defy God's commands. **In this case**, however... **it is** committing a far greater evil... **As long as** Peter follows that little, blinded god called "self", he is lost in his trespasses and sins. **And if he** blocks Jesus from the cross, we are all lost.

But there is hope for Peter. **Jesus isn't going** to do what Peter wants. **He's going to** do what Peter most needs. **He isn't going** to do Peter's will. **He's going to stick to His Father's Will.**

Jesus will go up to Jerusalem. **He will suffer** many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, those religious leaders who declare a false salvation. **He will be** killed... **nailed to** a cross... **and He** will be raised on the third day. **He will not** do this for Himself. **He will do** this for Peter and the rest of the sinful world.

And listen closely here, because Jesus announces this salvation to the disciples: **"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."**

Listen closely, Peter, for this salvation is for you... **Daily, you will** deny yourself by the Grace of God. **In other words**, you will daily confess your **reliance on yourself, your good intentions** and your **selfish** plans as the sins they are. **You will deny** yourself the sinful ideas that you have...**the way** you think Christianity should be **Then you will** take up your cross, **because Jesus has given you His. He declares**, **"Not your will, Peter, because your will cannot save you. Not your will, but Mine be done. I have died your death because of your sin-I have given My life on the cross that was intended for you. Therefore, My death is your death. My cross is your cross; and if you carry my death and my cross by faith, then sin no longer holds you in death."**

Peter will carry the cross of Jesus... **He will walk** in the forgiveness that Christ has won on that cross. **Though attacked by** the world, the devil and his own sinful flesh... **he will know** that his sins are paid for and that eternal life is sure. **There will be** suffering and hardship for Peter, as we mentioned last week... **but when** he suffers he will be at peace...**because Jesus** has already endured **the greater** suffering for his sins, and has credited to Peter His cross.

In the Small Catechism, Luther encourages us to begin and end each day in prayer. **And, to begin** those prayers, he advises us...to **"make the sign of the holy cross."** **He further says**, **"When I urge you to go to confession, I am simply urging you to be a Christian"** (LC, Brief Exhortation, 32). **This is another** way of repeating Jesus' teaching, **"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."**

There is good reason for this. **Daily, you are** hunted and haunted by a persistent false god. **It is constantly** with you, and there is no escape on this side of heaven. **It has an** attractive religion, this false god... **It likes happiness** and doesn't like unhappiness. **It likes to** avoid stressful situations and just can't stand matters that aren't enjoyable. **It will constantly** reassure you that it wants what's best for you... **that it** values you highly as an individual. **Left unchecked, however, this will destroy you.**

This false god is nothing other than your self-your sinful nature. **You have met the enemy, and it is you. It is our** sinful nature... **our sinful self**, that makes us so self-ish, looking out for us **at the expense** of all else and all others. **It is why**, in a room full of a hundred toys and two kids, one child will want only the toy that the other one is playing with. **It's the selfish, sinful nature at work.**

It is why you naturally want the biggest slice of pizza... **the piece** of cake with the most frosting... **and the** parking spot closest to the door...**and are** displeased when somebody else gets it. **It is why** you'd rather have someone else do the really crummy chores, whether it's changing the diapers, taking out the garbage, or adding the toner at work. **It's why you** want to win the fight, even when you're wrong.

It cuts into church-behavior, too. **Your typical Old** Adam will tell you that 8:00 is just too early for church while 10:45 cuts the day in half, and therefore church is just too inconvenient to get to... **it will** also add that if worship is not attention-grabbing...**that it isn't fun... it is old and stuffy this doctrine thing... therefore** can't be good. **It will show** you all sorts of better things to use money for than offerings. **When you are** asked to serve on a committee or board at church, your sinful self can easily convince you that... **even though** it's got to be done and you could certainly do it... **it won't** be that enjoyable so you should decline and let somebody else do it instead.

Now, all these instances may be a source of a rueful chuckle or an irritated groan. **BUT, all of** these are evidences of the sinful nature...**that Old Adam** inside of you that wants do your will, **not God's will. More to the point... all of** these are sin... **and it is you-and me-**who are guilty. **In other words,** when we act in these ways, we cannot say, "**I'm innocent, because myself is really to blame.**" **We can't divorce** ourself from our sinful nature. **We are ourselves...sinners... and we stand guilty before God.**

This is why Jesus declares, "**If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**" **This is not** some terrible task... **this is the** life of the Christian. **By the Law** of God, we know what our old sinful nature is like, **with all** of its selfish tendencies. **By the Grace** of God, we deny ourselves...**we deny** our sinful selves the authority and respect the Old Adam desires. **We declare to** the Lord that we naturally follow our own will and desires, **not His,** and we pray that He would forgive us for the sake of His crucified Son.

We say this, with Words like, "**I, a poor miserable sinner confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee,**" for this confesses our selfish sinfulness. **We sing,** "Lord have mercy upon us," and "**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us,**" praying that He-who died for our sins-would forgive us.

And He does! You hear that truth proclaimed in words like these: "**In the stead and by the command of Christ, I forgive you all of your sins.**" **The pastor announces** that Jesus forgives you...**that Jesus** takes away your sins! **Furthermore, he traces** a cross toward you as he says this awesome truth... **You are forgiven** because Christ has died your death on the cross, and He has shared His death with you in Holy Baptism. **His cross is** your cross!

This is the cross that you bear! **St. Paul makes** that clear in Galatians 2: "**I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me**" (v.20). He also says in Romans 6, "**Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**" (v. 4). **Jesus has placed** His cross and His victory over sin upon you, and that is the cross that you bear. In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen

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