

August 31, 2014
Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Matthew 16:21–28

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 16:21–28 (ESV)

²¹ 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 on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

A number of years I used to do a regular service at a nursing home in Crockett. It was a shortened version of the TLH page five service. I had started doing the service there because one of my members was a resident there and I thought that since she was unable to attend, I would bring the service to her.

So I spoke to the activity director and the following week, I began holding the service there every Tuesday morning. Attendance ranged from 8-20 each week depending on illnesses and appointments, but we all had a good time at worship. The only Lutheran was my member so I used their song book, and they used my liturgy.

Within a few weeks, I had all of the ladies (and one gentleman) doing and enjoying the historic liturgy and talking about who wrote that creed thing we said each week and how much they liked it.

There was however, one lady in a wheelchair who sat quietly through the service. She was there each week, never said a word and a caregiver usually wheeled her out right after the closing song.

This went on for about 6 months and one week she stayed after and as I went by shaking everyone's hands, she asked if I could take a confession. I told her as soon as I greeted everyone and the room cleared out a bit, I would gladly talk to her.

When I sat down with her, she had tears in her eyes and told me of a time long ago when she found herself with child as a teenager some 60 years earlier. Her parents sent her off to live with relatives, she gave birth and returned home. She later married, had other children and lived a full life, but it had been a life filled with guilt. The guilt over having sex out of wedlock, the guilt of giving up her child and never seeing him again. The guilt of never telling her husband nor anyone else about the child.

Can you imagine how she felt? To carry that secret sin for so many years. I didn't need to hit her about the head with the law, she was convicted of her sin, she knew it all too well, but what she was not comprehend or know, was her Savior. The devil had hidden Him from her.

I told her several things including how Christ had died for all sins on the cross and then I asked if she believed that Jesus died on the cross for her sins, including this sin that she had just confessed. With tears in her eyes, she said yes.

I also asked that if she believe that I, as a called and ordained servant of Christ, I could speak His forgiveness in His stead and that she would truly be forgiven by God. She replied yes.

I then spoke those wonderful, freeing words that you get to hear every week.

“In the stead and by the command of my Lord, Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

The change in her in that moment was beautiful. 60 plus years of guilt, washed away because she knew her Savior and that He had died for her sins. When the devil came calling with his lies of guilt, she could call upon the name of Jesus as her Savior and the devil no longer had a hold on her.

She continued to attend the nursing home services, but no longer to sit quietly, but to sing with us and to follow along in the liturgy and to hear those words of forgiveness again. She now not only knew about Jesus, she knew that He was her Savior!

Last week, we heard when Jesus asked the disciples who He was. They had been with him nearly three years and had witnessed the miracles and heard the parables. They had watched as the situation continued to grow uneasy for Jesus and his ministry as the Pharisees and Sadducees became more aggressive in their testing of him.

Were they ready? Is it time to ask the question that needed to be asked? *“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”* (Mt 16:13) Jesus asked. After various responses the much-needed question was asked: *“Who do you say I am?”* (Mt 16:15).

This is a question Jesus needed to ask. This is a question that must be asked of pastor and people. *“Who do you say that I am?”* (16:15). Because, you see, the reality is that there are many people who call themselves Christians who have never answered the question. And sadder still, they have not been asked the question!

Are we looking towards the Things of God or of men?

After Peter's response Jesus began to focus in on what He, as the Christ, must do—go to Jerusalem to suffer, to die, and then to rise again—to continue to carry out the Father's plan of redemption for humankind. Peter took him aside and rebuked him: *"Never, Lord! . . . This shall never happen to you!"* (16:22). Here is the very man who just moments ago had made that magnificent confession, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (16:16).

After all this time they still didn't get it! Is this not also true in our lives as struggling children of God who are following the Christ, the Son of the living God? Do we miss something important because we are still thinking about what has just been said? Do we not also slip into that mode of confessing, *"You are the Christ,"* but don't think that there is anything more involved? The nuts and bolts, **the cost**, of the sins that are forgiven?

This is the thing of God, that Jesus must go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed, and on the third day be raised to life. This is the uniqueness of the Son of God that he would die and then be raised to life, for your sins and my sins—our sins.

We, too, must take up our cross
What does Jesus mean when he said we are to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him? Are we moving into that area of our spiritual life that involves "the things of God"?

The greatest battle a Christian faces is the battle with oneself. The apostle Paul so beautifully speaks of the sin within us and the combat that is continually being waged between saint and sinner. The biggest concern we have as children of God is that we may become complacent.

And yet we have the beautiful confession of Peter and almost in the next breath he tries to pull Jesus away from “the things of God.”

One can become confused about “taking up the cross.” Some people, when they refer to “bearing a cross,” mean sickness or some other trial. But to bear the cross of Christ is to undergo verbal and even physical abuse because of your confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God—your willingness to lose your life for Christ Jesus.

We rejoice this morning and every day because Jesus was willing to do “the things of God”—to suffer and die and rise again. And He willingly did all this because He loves you.

Even while we were sinners, He willingly died for us (Rom 5:8). And God, our Father, accepted His willing sacrifice for us by raising him to life. May each and every one of us answer the question “Who do you say I am?” with a Spirit-directed answer, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and then fill our lives with doing “the things of God.” As Paul tells us, “But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).

In the name of Jesus, you are forgiven for all of yours sins.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria
To God alone be glory

“Who do you say that I am?”
Matthew 16:21–28

1. You are the Christ!
2. The things of God.
3. We too, must take up our cross.