

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

Pentecost 13
Saturday, August 29, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, August 30, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

“Get Behind Me”

Matthew 16:21-28

Two weeks ago, we heard about the Canaanite woman who was following after Jesus and the disciples. She was asking, begging for mercy. She is crying out, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.” That is one of the most clear confessions of faith in the Gospels. This is no small statement from her. However, it is not quite as complete of a confession as we heard from Peter last week: “You are the Christ; the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus says, “You are Peter, and on this rock (that is, upon this confession of faith) I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

All is well and good in Peter’s world at this time. Clearly, Peter not walking on the water, sinking into the water, and Jesus saying “O you of little faith, why did you doubt” is something that he can now put behind him.

But then we turn to our Gospel reading for today which Matthew places immediately after Peter made his confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus

has told them in no uncertain terms that He is the Christ, the Messiah promised to Adam and Abraham, and from that time, He begins to explain to the disciples what the plan is. He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Remember how last week, Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do the people say the Son of Man is?” and they rattled off a wide range of answers: “some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” The crowd was generally speaking out of confusion and ignorance concerning who the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of Man is.

And Peter makes his great confession about Jesus being the Christ. And now that Jesus starts explaining why the Christ has come, Peter begins speaking out of confusion and ignorance. Peter takes Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him.

Before we get to what Peter said, do you remember a couple of weeks ago with the Canaanite woman. The disciples beg Jesus to send her away because she is “crying out after us” – literally, she is behind us, following us and won’t stop asking for mercy. The people who oppose Jesus always try to stand before Him. They think they are there to teach. Peter makes this mistake.

Peter says, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” If this never happens to Jesus, we are all dead. Peter didn’t realize that this is the plan. The reality of salvation in Christ comes from being behind Him. This is the image of the Gospel. The Law of God is rightfully pointing at your sin and saying, “You are guilty. You are deserving of death and hell.” What Jesus has done is to

place Himself between you and the wrath of the Law. You stand behind Him. He is your strength and your shield.

If you choose to stand in front of Christ so that you can tell Him how things are going to be (like Peter was doing), He can't shield you from the wrath of the Law. The perfect Law of God demands punishment. And there is only one punishment. All sin is deserving of death. Jesus chose to suffer that death for you. From the time of Adam, this was the plan. God the Father was sending Jesus to stand between you and the sting of death.

When Peter told Jesus that Him dying on the cross should never be, Peter was standing on the wrong side of Jesus. Jesus wanted Peter behind Him because of His love for him. He wanted to shield him. Satan wants you to be on the wrong side of Jesus. Satan wants you to feel the full power of the sting of death.

Peter speaks this pious little lie and Jesus will have none of it. Jesus turns and says, "Get behind Me." Don't think you are walking with Me. Don't think you are here to teach Me. "Get behind Me, Satan." Peter is acting against the will of God, therefore, He is acting on behalf of Satan – tempting Him to find a different path rather than the painful and difficult road leading to the cross. Jesus says, "Get behind Me . . . You are a stumbling block to Me. . . You are not thinking the things of God but the things of men."

It is man's sinful nature which always seeks a different path to salvation apart from the cross. Our sinful nature doesn't like the cross because it means

that I can do nothing to save myself. Again, the Lord is my strength and my shield. Without His cross, I am dead.

Then Jesus says to the disciples, "If anyone would 'get behind' Me" (I know it says "come after" Me in the translation and that is correct, but the Greek word is the same as when Jesus said, "Get behind Me.") Don't miss the connection. If anyone would get behind Me, Jesus says, let him deny himself, let him disown himself and sing the hymn "What is the World to Me."

But, please, don't take this as a law that you must do well enough to make yourself right with God. If you could disown yourself enough so that you were keeping this "law", then you wouldn't need Jesus and His cross anymore. Our sin has wrecked what this world ought to be. This is a call to repent of your sin, to understand that I am selfish and without His cross, I am dead.

For, as Jesus says, "whoever desires to save his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." Jesus is saying that if anyone would get behind Me, let him disown himself, take up the cross (recognize that without Christ you are dead), and believe that Jesus is going to take care of this.

But the one who desires to save his own soul will lose it, because it can't be done. After all, out of all your possessions, what could you possibly give in exchange for your soul? What could you present before God and say, "Here, look, I have made it all better."?

The Lord is your strength and your shield. Jesus says, "Get behind Me."
Amen.