

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

April 06, 2025

I. Introduction

A. **Matthew 16:21-28**, 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 up on the third day. [22] Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” [23] But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” [24] Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. [25] For whoever wishes to 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 will a man give in exchange for his soul? [27] For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds. [28] Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

B. Pray

II. Hard fought battles before victory, suffering before glory

A. [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 be raised up on the third day.

1. The elders, chief priests, and scribes were the three primary groups making up the 71 member Sanhedrin – a group of men who functioned as Israel’s highest court with the power to condemn a man to death. However, during Rome’s occupation of Israel, they had to get Rome’s approval and active participation to carry out such decisions – which is why they took Jesus to Pilot.

a. **Some background:** The Sanhedrin was the group that paid Judas to betray Jesus, that had their soldiers arrest Jesus, and that promoted and supported false accusations against Jesus in order to condemn Him to death.

b. During their trial of Jesus, they charged Jesus with blasphemy against God as the justification for giving him a death sentence (**Matthew 26:62-66**). However, when they brought Jesus to Pilot

to get Rome's approval, they accused Jesus of treason against Rome (**Luke 23:1-3**).

- c. When Pilot asked the crowd whether to free Jesus or Barabbas, it was members of the Sanhedrin who urged the crowd to choose Barabbas (**Matthew 27:15-23**).
 - d. Apparently members of the Sanhedrin went to Jesus' crucifixion, and while there, taunted and ridiculed Him (**Luke 23:35-37**).
 - e. And it was the Sanhedrin who bribed the Roman soldiers, who had guarded Jesus' tomb, to lie and say that Jesus had not risen from the dead, but rather that His disciples came in the middle of the night and stole his body (**Matthew 28:11-15**).
 - f. Finally, it was the Sanhedrin who should have protected Jesus from this travesty of justice, rather than acting unjustly and having Him put to death.
 - g. May we always stand for justice – even when it puts our lives at risk or when it requires doing what we can to protect our enemy from injustice – regardless of what he deserves.
2. Jesus was saying that **He must** go to Jerusalem. In other words, going to Jerusalem was not optional if He was to do the will of God. But Jesus did not stop there, He said He must go to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed before being raised on the third day. There is a principle here that applies to all Christians everywhere.
 3. But before getting to the principle, I want to point out that this news seemed to be new news to the disciples, though it had been prophesied years before. For example, **Psalms 22** and **Isaiah 53** give graphic detail of what Jesus would endure.
 4. However, the disciples had a hard time understanding and accepting that Jesus would have to suffer and die – possibly because:
 - a. The belief of the day was that the Messiah would free them from the tyranny of Rome and re-establish Israel's independence as a nation. And the disciples saw Jesus as the Messiah.
 - b. The OT taught that God blesses the righteous – so it made no sense that God would make or even allow Jesus to suffer and die.
 - c. And they could not imagine life without Him. They believed Jesus had to be alive and present if they were to continue experiencing all the good they were experiencing because of Him.
 5. And yet, Jesus said **He must** go to Jerusalem and suffer before being raised on the third day. This brings us to the principle that applies to all of God's people: **In God's kingdom, hard fought battles come before victory, and suffering before glory.**

- a. Jesus said it this way, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. [25] For whoever wishes to save his life (*by avoiding the bloody battles and painful suffering that are a natural part of doing God’s will and growing in godliness*) will lose it; but whoever loses his life (*fights the battles and endures the suffering*) **for My sake** will find it.”
 - b. The reality is, as a sinner in a sinful world you, cannot live a godly Christian life and grow to spiritual maturity without fighting numerous battles against your own selfish and sinful desires, and against the world’s ways, and against the devil’s wily ways.
 - (1) I know that it is common for us Christians to think that the world and the devil are our greatest, most powerful foes. And though they are powerful and dangerous foes, your greatest, most powerful, most dangerous foe is your sinful, selfish, self-deceiving self – that you support by justifying behaviors and ways that you condemn in others.
 - (2) And in a sinful world, you cannot shine your light of Christ-likeness into the darkness around you without the forces of darkness and those who love the darkness fighting back.
 6. Though numerous scriptures support the principle that hard fought battles come before victory, and suffering before glory – let me give you just two.
 - a. **James 1:2-4**, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
 - b. **2 Timothy 3:12**, All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
 7. My encouragement to you is to embrace this principle, for it is the path to God’s abundant life, whereas the devil’s supposedly easier path always leads to suffering, unavoidable disappointment, and death.
- B. [22] Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” [23] But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”
1. Notice how Peter went from, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it,” **to**

- “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”
- a. This is an example of how easily and quickly circumstances can shift our focus so that we go from serving God to serving ourselves, the world, and the devil, **and from** seeking the good of God and others to seeking the good of self.
 - b. To avoid such swings, we need to seriously, deliberately, and consistently pursue God and godliness.
 - c. And we need an unrelenting vigilance (1) that is quick to recognize temptation when it appears, (2) and discern the allurements of the world when they become alluring to us, (3) and that recognizes when our selfish and sinful desires clamor to be gratified, (4) and that senses when we are looking for an easier, softer, more immediately pleasing path.
2. In rebuking Jesus, Peter was doing two things.
 - a. He was trying to restrain Jesus from doing God’s will, because it’s only possible outcome was suffering and death.
 - b. And he was inferring there could be an alternative path.
 3. Due to the horror that Jesus was facing, this rebuke became a stumbling block that offered an attractive alternative and a tempting reason for Jesus to do what Jonah did – go in the other direction.
 - a. The devil had put a similar stumbling block in front of Jesus when he took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and said, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me” (**Matthew 4:8-9**).
 - b. The reality is, both the devil’s temptation and Peter’s rebuke urged Jesus to place His own well-being and His own comfort before God’s will in order to save His life – in the here and now.
 - c. However, as Jesus said, the only possible outcome of placing your interests above God’s interests in order to save your life in the here and now is the loss of the life you are seeking to save.
- C. [24] Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me (*This is what Jesus did when the devil tempted Him with the offer of having it all without the cross, and when Peter rebuked Him for following the will of God because it’s only outcome would be suffering and death*). [25] For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it (*the devil and Peter were urging Jesus to save His life*); but whoever loses his life for My sake (*for God’s sake*) will find it. [26] For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and

forfeits his soul? (*Whatever we gain in this world that is of this world will be left in this world when we leave this world. It will not and cannot help us in the next.*) Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

1. These words, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” were very real to Jesus, for this is what He had to do to do the will of His Father.
 - a. In denying Himself and taking up His cross, did Jesus immediately suffer and die? NO! But in taking up His cross, He put Himself on a path that unalterably led to suffering and a horrible death.
 - b. And yet, He denied Himself. He took up His cross. He suffered beyond anything any of us have suffered. And He willingly gave up His life. Why? Because that was God’s will.
2. As is obvious, Jesus’ denial of self and taking up His cross came through the same principle that applies to us: In God’s kingdom, hard fought battles come before victory, and suffering before glory.
3. We may never experience suffering and trauma to the extent He experienced it, but we will pay a price to live according to God’s will and word.
4. However, if we are unwilling to pay that price, if we choose an easier, more comfortable path, if we go our own way instead of God’s way, we will save our life in the here and now, but what we have saved will **not only** be temporary, it will result in the loss of what we were wanting to save.
5. Jesus confirms this in **vs 27**.

D. [27] For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.

1. Why our deeds? Because our deeds reveal who we trust, where our allegiance lies, what we believe and value, who we love, and if we are devoted to saving our life in the here and now, or committed to denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and giving up our life – as Jesus did – for God’s sake.
2. The challenge we face with a coming judgment is that it is in the future – which means we can live for many years in denial of the outcome or the belief that we will come out of it in good shape.
 - a. Consider: It is only after the foolish, though conscientious criminal gets caught and sent to prison that he admits that his criminal activities were foolish, because whatever he got out of his criminal activities is not worth the price he is now paying. Could he have been wise sooner and avoided prison? Yes! And so can we.

- b. Sadly, some criminals never wise up and admit this to themselves, which is why they return to a life of crime after being released from prison.
 - 3. Let us be wise now – in spite of the immediate cost, for wisdom now brings great reward later, whereas foolishness now brings great loss later.
- E. Jesus concludes with a statement that many have tried to explain, yet, in my opinion, none have succeeded. [28] Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”
- 1. I have no idea what Jesus means here. I believe He knows what He means, and that to Him this statement makes perfect sense. But I cannot make sense of it and I have not found anyone who has – though some they think they have.
 - 2. So we will leave it at that.

III. Conclusion

- A. In God’s kingdom, in the church, in the Christian’s life – victory comes through hard fought battles, and glory comes through suffering. This is the path of life – the abundant life now and eternal life with God in eternity. The only outcome of seeking an easier, more comfortable, less troublesome, less threatening path is the loss of the life you are trying to save.
- B. God’s interests and man’s interests are in opposition to each other. Beware of trading God’s will for your will – even when God’s will includes suffering and an untimely, painful death. To make such a trade is to go from serving God to serving Satan, the world, and your own selfish and sinful desires.
- C. Beware of being like Peter when dealing with believers who are suffering. If you care more for their comfort and present happiness than for their character, relationship with God, and love of others, you will place a stumbling block in front of them that will direct them away from God’s interests to the pursuit of their own, self-serving interests.
- D. Though it may be hard to see when you are suffering, losing your life in this age is a small price to pay to preserve it for the age to come.