



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday of Pentecost 2017

*The Way of the Cross versus the way of  
human glory!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 16, 21-28:

- <sup>21</sup>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.
- <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."
- <sup>23</sup>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."
- <sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- <sup>25</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
- <sup>26</sup>For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?
- <sup>27</sup>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.
- <sup>28</sup>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."
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts for Your Words of Life so that we will take up our cross and follow Jesus. Amen.*

### • **Dear Beloved of God!**

• On the rock, Peter, the confessing disciple, Jesus was going to build His church. Simon Peter had given the right confession on behalf of the Twelve, that *"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Only moments later Jesus reprimanded Simon in the harshest way possible, *"Get behind me satan. You are a hindrance to me."* Peter went from right confession to uttering the words of satan. Both, good and evil in the same person. Light and darkness, saint and sinner, in the same Peter. Jesus explained to Peter, *"you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."* Very significant. Jesus is highly upset, to say the least, because Peter was *thinking* wrongly!! Did Peter mean it good with Jesus? From a human point of view, I would say, yes, he didn't want Jesus to suffer and die- the resurrection part he

probably overheard. He just heard, Jesus would suffer and die. That could not be. Far be it from you Lord. This shall never happen to you. This falls outside the scope of being messiah!

- Peter was trumping up here. He would not allow this to happen. He rebuked our Lord Jesus. Make me the leader and I will turn things around here. My messiah will not die!
- Peter's extravagantly mistaken response to Jesus exposes something key: Peter's refusal to accept the fact that Jesus has to die, that it is absolutely necessary, shows that there was no room for a suffering and dying Messiah in the expectations of the Israelites. There is proof of many different ideas about the coming messiah for those times, but none of them included a suffering and dying messiah. One such source even speaks of the servant messiah prophesied in Isaiah 53, but still portrays him as a triumphant messiah.
- By that time Jesus had already taught, by example and word, that the reign of God has come in a surprising way, namely, in a form that is able to be opposed and even hated. It can be rejected by the weakest person.
- The reign of God does not come forcefully, let alone violently, like any other reign normally would, as it takes over from the previous reign. On the other hand, it can also not be entered by force! Jesus said, unless you become like the little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.
- The kingdom of God is not compatible with the human mind, neither its coming nor entering into it.
- Therefore, there is no place in it for a mind that thinks along humanism's terms! There is no place in the reign of God for a mind that assumes that there is something good in any human, or that humankind is basically good. It is not OK to say the right confession, but think wrongly about God's Messiah, God's Way of salvation! Whoever denies that Jesus had to be crucified and die for my own salvation and for the salvation of others has satanic thoughts.
- God's Way is not only different to humankind's ideas of saving the world, including all religions- it stands diametrical against all such ways, means, idols, plans and schemes.
- Whilst Peter gave the right confession on behalf of the Twelve, now, in his response, opposing Jesus' way to the cross, he spoke on behalf of fallen humankind! On behalf of a humankind which has fallen, hook line and sinker, for the ideas of the *diabolos*, the arch-enemy of God, who majors in confusing and deceiving us humans so that we

don't consider the things of God. The deceiver keeps us curved into ourselves, concerned about me, myself and mine! He feeds us with the spirit of humanism, which keeps telling us that we can change the whole world, that we can gain the whole world by means of an iron will.

- Don't you know the saying, "Where's there's a will there's a way"! It means, if you are determined enough, you can find a way to achieve what YOU want, even if it is very difficult.

- Peter was determined, very determined. Later on he voiced his determination by saying, that he is prepared to die on behalf of Jesus. 'Only over my dead body' kind-of- a- thing will they kill you, Jesus.

- What Peter was saying, I think, if we are honest, kind of sounds good to our old Adam's ears. My old Self certainly resonates with what he was saying. I kind of think, shame, he was just trying to be good. I think, deep down, we would like to ask Jesus, Jesus weren't You a bit too harsh with Peter. Can't you see, he meant it good. Was it really necessary to identify him with satan?

- To be sure, these thoughts are not good. They are evil. They are the very reason Jesus had to die. Why? Because when we reason like this, we don't realise the full extend of our sinfulness! We don't see the depth of our problem!

- A humankind and its religions which assumes that it only needs a messiah to help itself unite in peace then humankind has not even begun to realise the deep seated evilness in the very hearts of all human beings!

- Dear congregation, with this idea of pursuing peace and equality for all, above all, you might gain the whole world fighting for it, you might unite many people behind yourself and such a movement, but, what will you give in exchange for your soul? Gaining peace and order, as important as it is, to work towards, also for us as Christians, this does not save our souls from damnation.

- Jesus reminds us of the fact that the Last Day of Judgement is approaching and who will remain standing against the accusation of the First Commandment? You shall have no other God's beside me.

- We desperately needed a Messiah who took our place in God's Judgement. There is only one such a Messiah, Christ Jesus, anointed in His baptism for this mission. He willingly took up His cross. He accepted all the suffering and blaspheming caused by the very people He was doing this for. He let the sinners, in whose hands He was given, to have their way with Him. *He did not resist them*. He did this for saving our souls and bodies.

- What we have to realise again, Jesus' Way does not look good, does not conform to our expectations or definitions of success or glory.
- Therefore Jesus says to us, who have been baptised onto His Way, into His kingdom, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up His cross and follow me. *"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."*
- The way of Jesus is not the way of ambition, comparison, exalting oneself, but denying oneself. We are called to look at our own darkness within ourselves, the wrong thinking and attitudes in our hearts and deny ourselves, confess our sins. And then we take up our cross, we accept the daily struggle with sin. And we will come up against the trouble and evil of the world. It will not go smoothly in our lives. There will be resistance, because we follow Christ.
- Furthermore, where we are met with evil, with hatred and resistance, because we follow Jesus and helping our neighbours, in the Spirit of Christ we will deny the way of power in these situations. This denial of fighting back with power will expose us, will make us vulnerable to various kinds of attack, shame and harm.
- And when this happens, when you experience this you may know that this is precisely God's Way of reigning graciously in a rebellious world- not paying back evil with evil, but evil with good.
- This gives us a completely new perspective for our lives in these evil times: we live in redeemed times. Jesus has bought us free, to be free to give up the toxic idea of having to fight for the control of all situations in our lives. God accomplishes His mission even when we are suffering injustice! God's mission is not fulfilled in power, but in weakness!
- In Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, we have salvation. He empowers us to trustingly hand over to Him all attempts to try and dodge suffering and shame. But this does not ruin our true LIFE. It trains us and shapes us for the day of God's Glory, when all things will be settled forever. That Day the righteous will shine like the sun. Then suffering will be something of the past, forever. Then God's Mission which He pushed forward in weakness will be revealed as the new creation, the new organism, the Body of Christ in which we will live in joy forever. Lord, thank you for saving us and for renewing our minds! **Amen.**
- *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13, 14).*