

Following the King: The Cross and the Crown

Text: Matthew 16:13-27 NRSV – Put graphic art up

In 1913, Methodist Episcopal minister George Bennard pinned these words:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
the emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it someday for a crown.

To that old rugged cross I will ever be true,
It's shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then he'll call me someday to my home far away,
where his glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it someday for a crown.

Matthew 16:13-27

13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

21From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." 23But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? 27 "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done."

True discipleship embraces both the suffering of the cross and the glory of the crown. – Put title up

Pray

Background – The Pivot Point of Jesus' Ministry
Caesarea Philippi Graphic

- ❖ They are walking through Caesarea Philippi, a city filled with idols and pagan temples. Before the name was changed to Caesarea Philippi, it was known as Paneas, after the Greek god Pan.
 - **This Greek God, Pan,** was depicted as a horned half-man, half-goat god of lust, fear, nature, and shepherds. He is the one whose very name gave us our word *panic*. “Panikos” was a Greek word derived from his name, describing sudden fear and terror due to his terrible appearance. From Pan’s image comes inspiration for the later Baphomet, the horned goat idol still worshiped in Satanism today. It is the same spirit of fear and corruption that still haunts this world, just in new disguises. The same teaching of sexual promiscuity, fear mongering, and humanism is being perpetuated with their evil “shepherd” leading them.
 - **As you come into Caesarea Philippi, there stood Mount Hermon.** At the base of Mount Hermon was the dark, open mouth of a cave. For centuries, it had been a stage for pagan worship.
 - In the days of the Canaanites, it was Baal-Gad’s domain, who, just like Pan, was also associated with fertility, nature, and shepherds. So, when the Greeks arrived and saw the similarities between this old god and their god Pan, they simply gave the old spirit a new name.
 - **They built a temple around the cave.** Worshipers would cast their sacrifices into its waters, a spring so deep they thought it bottomless. If the offering sank, the gods had accepted it. If it floated, the gods had rejected it.
 - **Due to all of these pagan practices** that had permeated this cave for centuries, the surrounding Jewish communities called it **“the gates of Hell.”**
 - So, look at the intentional circumstance that Jesus has put the disciples in. They are surrounded by false gods made of clay, wood, and stone. And right in front of this false god, Pan, who was supposed to be the god of the shepherds
 - By the time the disciples found themselves in Matthew 16, the teachings found in John 10 would have already been given, where Jesus says that He is the one and only **True Good Shepherd.**
 - **And although Pan demanded sacrifices of death to be thrown into a pit, Jesus became our sacrifice, was laid in a pit of death for you and me, and He rose three days later with all power and authority!** In the midst of all of these false gods, He asks, “Who do men say that I am?”

The Question of Identity (vv. 13–17)

❖ “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

- They begin to divulge all of the theories lingering around.
 - **John the Baptist**. This comes from Herod Antipas’ fear of John the Baptist coming back from the dead after he had John beheaded. This is found in Matthew 14:2
 - **Prophets** like Elijah and Jeremiah.
 - There were Jewish teachings based on Malachi 4 that the great prophet Elijah would come back to announce the messiah.
 - Jeremiah was known for being extremely critical of the priests, rituals, and false assurances of the religious system during his time. An example would be the “temple mantra” found in Jeremiah 7. By the time of Jesus, Jeremiah was associated with anyone who confronted the religious system.

❖ “But who do you say that I am?”

- Jesus subtly makes a distinction between people who merely know of Him and those who walk with Him.
 - **There are many theories** in this world that claim to know who Jesus is.
 - Some call Him a wandering Buddhist monk or Hindu guru who learned his teachings growing up in India.
 - Others call Him a psychedelic shaman who simply drugged his disciples with mushrooms.
 - Others consider Him a mere man who was a failed revolutionary zealot.
 - Still others dismiss Him as a purely made-up myth.
 - **And in every age**, people have tried to label Jesus through their misunderstandings.

- **BUT LISTEN**, the greatest danger is not when the world misnames Him, but when the church tries to preach a Jesus that they do not know themselves.

❖ Peter spoke up and said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”

- Jesus immediately blesses him and says that “flesh and blood” had not revealed this to him, but only by God the Father.

- The moment of your true revelation of Jesus is not based on parents, preachers, teachers, or philosophers. It is not passed down by tradition, and it cannot be inherited through a bloodline.
 - That revelation of Jesus only comes at a time when you no longer just know about Him, but when you come face-to-face with Him.
 - Your definition of religion cannot begin with **what we do, who we are**, or with **what we know**, but only with who He is.
- ❖ “You cannot truly follow the King until you know who He is. And you cannot truly know who you are until you know who He is.”
- Everyone must come to the point in their life where they are, just like the disciples, surrounded by cultural idols, ideas, false teachings, and pressures of opinions. And in that moment, you must ask yourself the question, “Who do I say Jesus is?”
- ❖ Once you finally grasp who He is, Jesus promises that upon the rock of this revelation He will build His church, AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST.
- Preach
 - ◆ No false god
 - ◆ No demon of lust
 - ◆ No spirit of fear
 - ◆ No persecution that may come
 - And you will have “the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven!!!”

Up until this time, the disciples had seen miracles, heard kingdom teaching, and watched crowds gather, but now they were about to learn about...

The Paradox of the Messiah (vv. 21–23)

- ❖ Jesus explains that He must go to Jerusalem, undergo great suffering from the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and die.
- Peter, the same disciple who had just confessed Jesus as Christ, rebukes Him. Why? Because Peter wants the **crown without the**

cross. His perception of the Messiah makes no room for suffering, but only for glory.

- **By the first century**, different rabbinic teachings had led to competing ideas of the Messiah. Some expected a **priestly figure**, others a **prophetic reformer**, but most clung to the hope of **a new and conquering king, like David**, who would drive out the oppression of Rome and restore Israel's throne.
 - This is the reason why Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem on His third and final trip, where the crowds were **waving palm branches**, which were the national emblem of Israel's resistance. That's why they sang out Psalm 118, **"Hosanna! Save us now!"** It was their revolutionary cry for deliverance.
- ❖ **Jesus responds** to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan," showing that **any vision of glory without suffering is satanic in origin.** *Tweet that*
- In fact, Peter is unknowingly using the same temptation that Satan had already offered Jesus in Matt. 4. **Satan had offered Jesus a way to have the kingdoms without the crucifixion, to have the crown without the cross, to have the glory without Golgotha.**
 - It's amazing that Peter, which means rock, is at one moment a stone that Jesus can build His church, and the next moment is being called a stumbling block.
 - **And if it was easy for Peter, who walked with Jesus, to mess up this badly, how easily are we tempted to conform Jesus to the type of savior we want Him to be?**
 - ◆ A Christ that comforts but never corrects.
 - ◆ A Savior that prospers us but never prunes us.
 - **If your discipleship makes room for blessing but not for suffering, you are following the wrong kind of Christ.** *Mic Drop*

So, Jesus reveals the paradox of the Christ who must suffer, Peter rebukes him, and Jesus, in turn, confronts everyone there with the cost of following Him. He hits them with...

The Call of the Cross (vv. 24–26)

- ❖ "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me."
- Peter is speaking on behalf of everyone there out of concern for Jesus. But Jesus widens the scope for them by saying, **"carrying the**

cross isn't just for me. If you want to follow, you have to pick yours too."

- Every disciple must face the turning point where faith moves from admiration to participation.

❖ The cross was not just an ornament to hang on a wall or an accessory to wear on a chain. It was Rome's "most cruel and loathsome punishment, reserved for the worst of criminals and rebels. And they knew how to make it as humiliating, degrading, and excruciating as possible for as long as possible.

- The poor persons receiving the punishment would have to bear the weight of the cross on their shoulders as they carried the cross up to their place of execution. Which was usually next to the most-traveled roads. They wanted you to be a spectacle for everyone to see.

- So, how visible is your walk with Christ?

- They were most often stripped naked, with nothing to cover their dignity.

- When was the last time that you lived your life undignified for Christ? When was the last time you stopped trying to cover up your shortcomings and mess-ups?

- They were beaten and mocked, ridiculed and eventually killed. It cost them absolutely everything.

- But the church today is worried about gaining absolutely everything.

❖ But that's alright, because Jesus follows it up with this: He flips the logic.

- Whoever wants to save his life will lose it.

- Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

- The world says cling to it → Jesus says let it go.

- The world says protect it at all costs → Jesus says pour it out.

- The world says build yourself up → Jesus says lay yourself down.

- ❖ The Apostles took this teaching so seriously that all but one gave the ultimate sacrifice for their faith. John the Revelator was sent away in exile, but everyone else bore crosses, spears, clubs, swords, and fire.
 - One such story of their sacrifices that strikes me to my core is that of the apostle Andrew.
 - When faced with the crucifixion on an X-shaped cross, Andrew was recorded as greeting it, embracing it, and saying, “O blessed Cross, I’ve long awaited. Take me away from men, and restore me to my Master, that He who redeemed me on the cross may receive me through the cross.”
- ❖ The Paradox: You gain your life by giving it away. You gain your crown through your cross.

Conclusion – The Promise of the Crown (v. 27)

- ❖ In verse 27, Jesus reaches back to Daniel chapter 7, which describes the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven with all dominion, glory, and power. And He repays everyone for what they have done.
 - What may seem to be lost temporarily in this life, every tear, every sacrifice, and every hidden act of obedience, is repaid unimaginably more for eternity.
 - 2 Timothy 4:8 says that there is a crown of righteousness that is laid up in heaven for us.
 - That gives a deeper meaning to the song when it says, “Till my trophies at last I lay down.”

The world says: save yourself and live for the now.
 The King says: lose yourself now and live for eternity.

Altar Call