

Sermon Outline

“Jesus’ Cross and Ours” Matthew, Part 47 – Matthew 16:21-28 – Kevin Rogers – August 25, 2013

Introduction

1. My wife Jami and I are blessed to have five children under the age of seven – the fifth was born last month. We have become pretty familiar with the world of nap times, diapers, and potty training! But recently we were talking about how shocking it was when we brought our first little one home from the hospital. We thought life was going to be like those Gerber commercials where the babies are always serene and cleaning up the occasional accident is a brief, joyful celebration for the happy couple. But by the end of the first month I literally thought I was going nuts. It felt like there was a human alarm clock going off every 2-3 hours and we never knew exactly what would make it stop.
2. Unmet expectations can really shake us. In today’s passage, we will see how the disciples’ expectations of the Messiah were out of line. Jesus needed to adjust their expectations, and I trust he’s going to adjust ours, too.
3. This passage begins the last major section of Matthew’s gospel. Up to this point we have seen him preaching and healing in the outlying regions of Israel; from now on he is headed toward Jerusalem where he will accomplish the central events of his earthly ministry. To prepare his disciples, he begins teaching them plainly what it means for him to be the Messiah and what the implications will be for those who follow him.

Jesus Is The Suffering Savior (vs. 21-23)

1. For the first time, Jesus explicitly tells his disciples he is going to die. He tells them he must go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of the religious leaders, be killed, and rise again on the third day. This is what he and the Father had planned before the foundation of the world. It is the core of what he came to do. But for the disciples, who fully expected their Messiah to triumph over his enemies, this was an earth-shattering revelation. None of them anticipated a Messiah who would suffer.
2. The disciples take this news hard. They had chosen to follow this man, to shape their lives around him. Their future was intricately connected with his. Having expected him to take power and usher in an unprecedented era of national prosperity, it was a major shock to learn that he was preparing to die.
3. Peter reacts by rebuking Jesus. Maybe the Lord’s commendation in the previous passage (see verse 17-18) had gone to his head. But imagine the audacity of rebuking the Son of God! Jesus reacts strongly himself: “Get behind me, Satan!” He was not implying that Peter was Satan, but rather that Peter’s words aligned with Satan’s effort to thwart God’s plans.

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4. Both Satan and Peter wanted Jesus to establish his kingdom without suffering. To both Jesus responds, “away from me!” Peter is the rock upon which Christ would build his church, but at this moment he’s a very different kind of rock – a stumbling stone that could hinder the Lord’s resolve to go to the cross. Wherever and whenever the gospel has been preached, the idea of a suffering Savior has offended people (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).
5. People today are as uncomfortable with a crucified Savior as Peter was. They prefer to see him as a compassionate, moral teacher. But we can’t pick and choose the characteristics we like. Jesus’s death and resurrection were central to his mission.
6. Peter didn’t sign up to serve a Messiah who would die. That didn’t fit his expectations. Can you relate? Have you ever said to God in the midst of a difficult experience, “This isn’t what I signed up for when I chose to follow you”? Eventually Peter would learn that when his priorities conflicted with God’s priorities, his plans must yield – not God’s. We must learn the same.
7. Many people who have converted to Christianity in other parts of the world are not surprised by suffering; it’s all they have ever known. They expect to suffer and they find comfort in Christ and hope for deliverance. Our experience in America is so different. We have to remind ourselves that suffering is a part of the Christian life. Our Lord’s triumph came through suffering, not by avoiding it. He is the suffering Savior.

Jesus’s Followers Find Life In Him As They Die To Themselves (vs. 24-28)

1. Jesus was not only going to die – he was going to die by crucifixion, the most humiliating and merciless form of execution known at that time. It was degrading for the victim and all those associated with him. Wearing a cross necklace is commonplace now, but would you wear an image of someone being tortured by waterboarding? This was scandalous.
2. Followers of Jesus must be willing to lose their lives for Christ’s sake (vs. 25), in two ways. First, through self-denial. If running after Christ and his mission ruins our old ambitions, hinders our career advancement, or results in mockery or physical suffering at the hands of the world, we willingly suffer in order to follow him (Philippians 3:7-11). We imitate the example of those first disciples, whose suffering and death caused the gospel to spread.
3. Losing our lives for Christ’s sake must also be taken literally. Virtually all of his 12 disciples paid the ultimate price. So did countless other believers in the early church. And today it is estimated that 270 Christians around the world die each day simply because they follow Jesus. As our church gets more engaged in taking the gospel to all nations, it’s very possible that one of our own could be called on to lay down his or her life for the name of Jesus.

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4. In verse 27, Jesus describes how he will one day return with glory and “repay each person according to what he has done.” Those who have lived for themselves will suffer infinite loss. Those who have died to self in this life will live forever, sharing in Christ’s victory. The suffering Messiah will be glorified – and his people will be glorified with him.

Conclusion

1. We can summarize the main point of this passage like this: **Suffering precedes glory for Jesus and his disciples.** The kingdom will come through crucifixion. The cross comes before the crown. We find life in Jesus, both now and forever, when we die to ourselves.
2. We follow a Savior who suffered and died. King Jesus will reign forever as the Lamb who was slain. How should this reality affect us? What does it mean to take up our cross daily within our homes and families? With our money and time? What will it look like for you to take up your cross and follow Jesus this week in Montgomery County?
3. Eternal victory is sure, and our day of glory is coming. But for us, as with Jesus, it comes through death.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 16:21-28.
2. Kevin describes the shock of discovering that life with a newborn baby didn’t look like a Gerber commercial. Do you have a humorous example of unmet expectations?
3. When Jesus announced he was going to die, why do you think Peter rebuked him? Why did Jesus respond the way he did?
4. The disciples expected their Teacher to be crowned as king, not crucified. Describe a point in your Christian life where you thought, “This isn’t what I signed up for.”
5. Are there ways in which you suffer because of your commitment to Jesus? According to this passage, should suffering surprise us? Why or why not?
6. Jesus asks in verse 26, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” Take a minute to ask the Holy Spirit to search you and reveal any areas where you are seeking to save your life rather than lose it for Christ’s sake.
7. Pray for grace to embrace the example of the suffering Savior.