

## The Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (2017)

**Matthew 16:21–28** 21From 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. 22And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." 23But 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."

24Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26For 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? 27For 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. 28Truly, 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."

In the Name of Jesus.

‘The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.’

That is the first verse of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. And it explains what our Lord Jesus means by coming after Him, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, giving up on saving ourselves, our souls, and thus ‘finding our lives!’

As the son of Abraham, Jesus was heir to the promise to Abraham that HE would bless ‘all nations!’ So the last verses of the Gospel have Him sending out the Eleven to the nations.

As the son of David, Jesus was heir to the promise that David would always have a descendant to rule over the kingdom of heaven, the people of the Living God. And the Lord’s last words in this Gospel speak of His authority, ‘ALL authority in heaven and on earth.’ But, specifically, He says that He HAS that authority, can bless all nations and rule the people of the Living

God, because that authority had been ‘GIVEN’ to Him!

What is ‘given,’ my dear ones, is not ‘earned,’ as wages or reward or recognition or anything like that! Not even with our Lord!

Had He not EARNED the right to ‘all authority in heaven and on earth?’ What a TEMPTATION! To DEMOTE our reigning King Jesus to the ranks of the ‘elders and chief priests and the scribes,’ who would secure His torture. When the Lord next speaks of His Suffering, He states that the representative of the great power of Rome will take part too in this. And that prediction, again, makes His disciples so sad.

And it is NOT simply because they feel bad for their leader, their teacher, their friend Jesus. Simon Peter revealed what appears so sad to us born in the kingdom of evil, when Peter pulled Jesus aside—must be serious!—and even REBUKED the Lord! And for that sincerity, for that show of SUPPORT, Peter earns the title of ‘Satan.’ When Peter FIRST tried to push Jesus away, at the miraculous catch of fish, declaring that he, Peter, was too sinful to be in the presence of God-in-the-flesh, Jesus could not be push away. But the text says that Jesus ‘turned,’ meaning, He turned HIS back on Peter then, there!

Jesus’ friend, His disciple cannot drive away the son of Abraham and David by admitting that he himself is unfit to meet His God. But he CAN, you and I can turn away the face of blessing shown to us from heaven in the Son of Mary, whenever we DEMOTE our King from His throne: the cross; our cross, our Baptism into Christ; the Holy Gospel!

The Holy Gospel declares that since the day Mary's Boy was baptized with all the sinners confessing their helplessness, heaven was pleased—well pleased!—to make That Man King of heaven and earth! When That Man, by going into the water, OUR dirty water, made it clear that you are ONLY going to find GOD now, His authority and His kingdom, where poor, little people, sometimes just two or three, DENY...ANY...DISTINCTION for THEMSELVES that OTHER MEN do not share!

So, Jesus could never be elected ruler of Rome, nor of Jerusalem, state OR church! Not if that decision falls into the hands of those who MUST make a SHOW—to HEAVEN...OR...TO MEN—that there is INDEED distance, daylight, between ME, between US, and the REST of the HERD of men!

My dear ones, this is nothing new in the record of the Bible. When Old Israel first entered the Holy Land, they HAD a King! A Good One too! The Living God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob! They had His Law; they had the ark of atonement, where their transgressions against Heaven's Will were yearly passed over and taken away. They had land to live in and work, as if they were in the Garden of Eden all over again, with their Creator well pleased with them again! They had been baptized through the Red Sea, AND the Jordan River—(that's language, pictures from the Bible)—they were fed with bread from heaven to get them to the place of God's rest. And there was no reason, on the part of God, that their lives should ever be moved, lives of loving their God with their whole being, together with loving their neighbors as themselves.

But THAT was not enough for Old Israel! And whenever you and I get all hot and bothered about the news, politics, current events, and so on, we know exactly how those people felt!

They wanted a KING! A flesh-and-blood king, the way all the other nations had, the Bible records. The Lord's great prophet of the time, Samuel, burned with anger and complained to the Lord. But the Lord pulled one of His strange things. He told Samuel to give the people just...what...they...wanted! A king to boast of; a ruler to throw elbows with the nations and powers of this world.

But the Lord told Samuel just what to expect from their choice of King. It's a great read, my dear ones! Over and over, the text says, 'This king you want will take; and take; and take; and take; and take from you! And then, he will TAKE some more!'

And what did Old Israel say? The same thing you and I say, when we support the kingdom of evil with our unbelief and other sins: 'We still want that king!'

From there on, my dear ones, Israel was doomed. The first king, Saul, was rejected. David—about as good a king as you could look for—committed horrible, almost unspeakable crimes; taking, taking: another man's wife; that man's life; the glory of God's people.

And yet, the Lord had promised that from THAT taker, THAT David, would come a ruler to fulfill the promise to Abraham, to be

a blessing to all nations!

And that king, is our Lord Jesus.

By His abuse at the hands of the leaders of the ONLY true religion in the world, He finished forever—in HEAVEN'S estimation!—the delusion that ANY group of men is superior to any other group.

By His suffering at the hands of the leaders of the godless nations, Heaven confirmed—in the flesh; HEAVEN, in the flesh!—confirmed that until the End, this world in which we've been created, THIS Kingdom, has NO...PLACE... no room, for the True God.

Dear Christians, the Lord's talk about HIS Suffering, AND...OUR...CROSS, CANNOT be just ANOTHER form of 'take, take, take!'

He...AIN'T...that kind of King!

He is the King Who walked around God's altar in innocence, and YET was sacrificed on that altar, as if HIS achievements, EVEN...HIS!—do NOT make HIM in any way SUPERIOR to any of the rest of—any of the nations!

You MUST see what Good News this is! For you perhaps; but I know FOR CERTAIN in is for me!

I had a man recently interrogating me about my ‘call’ to be a minister, and of my ‘faith’ in Jesus. It’s been an intense workout. I must have confessed the faith of the Apostles’ Creed properly, the faith of our Baptism into Christ, the Thanksgiving we present to our God at the Lord’s Supper—

For with a confused look, the man said, ‘You sure make the Christian faith, AND your call to the Church’s ministry, sound like it is all COMPLETELY located OUTSIDE of you!’

The poor man wanted me to object, to state all the warm fuzzies purring around inside me, the ‘goddish’ something in me that others must not have, or have in a lesser degree, or something...

Instead, it’s been months since I felt so good at a confession of the Christian faith!

I said to the nice man, ‘You’re a Lutheran now!’

For THAT, my dear ones, IS the essence of the cross of Jesus, ours, our Baptism, our faith, the certainty of prayers heard—and that God is NOTHING, NOTHING AT ALL!—now, now that Christ has been ‘given’ all authority---God is NOTHING...AT...ALL, if He is NOT my dear Father, with NOTHING better to do today than to hear my prayers, forgive them, rework my prayers into something intelligible and godly, and then bless me.

What is my certainty of all that? NOTHING inside of me at all! Instead, I have the Gospel, coming from the outside, the Good News of Jesus, God in the flesh! And ALL He does is GIVE to me!

I have my baptism into Christ, which is open to the nations, to all.

I have—you and I have, my friends, Christ's Body and His Blood—GI-VEN and shed for us; because what we need heaven to GIVE US today, is ALL the authority of Jesus: pardon for who we are, what we do; that we have NOTHING over against any other people.