

## “FOR WHAT WILL IT PROFIT...?”

Sermon Text – Matthew 16:21-28  
Sun. & Mon., August 30 & 31, 2020  
13<sup>th</sup> Sun. a. Pentecost, Proper 17 A  
OT Lesson – Jeremiah 15:15-21  
Epistle – Romans 12:9-21  
Gospel – Matthew 16:21-28  
Zion Lutheran Church, Beecher, IL

You may also view the entire worship service including a form of this sermon being preached. Use this link to view it on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/l5DtjzD4wSQ>

The sermon begins at the 29:45 minute mark. If you have time, please listen to the sermon on YouTube. (It has more “application” to our present day political and social situation than do these notes.)

In the name of Jesus! [Amen.]

The sermon for today / tonight is based on the Gospel reading read earlier. I’ll read one verse of it again: **[Jesus said:] “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?”** (Mt. 16:26, ESV)

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

It was great!! It was one of the highest highs that I’ve ever observed in another person!

You’d agree with me... wouldn’t you? You don’t know what I’m talking about? You should... You were there too! At least... most of you were there.

Last week in our Divine Service, in the Gospel reading for the day, we heard Jesus *personally* called Peter “**blessed.**” Come on... who *wouldn’t* be happy with that? Who wouldn’t experience the highest high possible by just being witness to someone else being called “**blessed**” by God, Himself, in Jesus?

This happened to Peter... because the Holy Spirit had given him a revelation of who Jesus is. Peter shouted it out, “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!**” (Mt. 16:16, ESV) And that’s why Peter was beside himself with joy at hearing Jesus’ response to his confession of faith.

But all this joy and happiness didn’t last long... did it? Shortly after Peter confessed who Jesus was, Peter’s chronic “foot in mouth” disease flared up *again!* You heard that *too.* *THAT* was just a few minutes ago – in *today’s* Gospel reading.

As Jesus and the disciples continued in their discussion... Jesus began to explain just what His mission on earth was to be as “**the Christ, the Son of the Living God.**” “**...He must go to Jerusalem,**” He told them, “**suffer many things... and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised [to life].**” (v. 21)

To our chagrin, upon hearing this, Peter decided that He knew better than Jesus. Instead of following behind and learning from Jesus... Peter stepped in front of Jesus... and tried to lead *Him!* St. Matthew writes: **Peter took [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke Him, saying “Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to You!”** (v. 22)

And then... we all heard it *and cringed*: **[Jesus] 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.”** (v. 23)

Yeah... as we observed before... one moment Peter was basking in the joy that Jesus had personally called him **“blessed...”** and the *next moment* Jesus called Peter **“Satan...”** and said that Peter was a **“hindrance”** to Him and His mission!

**So it was with Peter... and so it is with you!**

Like Peter, you’ve received the revelation that Jesus **“is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”** And... like Peter... you, too, often lose sight of that revelation from God and begin using your own human reason. You... too... sometimes stop following Jesus and try to lead Him.

Am I wrong to say that? Well... you tell me...

Are you kinda like Peter... one minute confessing that Jesus is your Lord... and the next minute... you’re telling Jesus to take a break... and that you’ll lead your own life?

**“Jesus,”** we say, **“Let me drive! I know where I’m going. I know what I’m doing! I know what’s best for me!”**

Jesus understood Peter... *and* He understands you. He understands *all people*. But... rather than calling His angels to drag Peter to hell... out of His divine mercy... Jesus rebukes Peter. And in doing that... Jesus teaches NOT just Peter... but actually all His disciples of *all eras*... that they’re to follow *Him rather* than their own whims!

Yeah... they’re always to let *Jesus* “drive!” You see, Peter was trying to convince Jesus to take the easy road. With his words, Peter was telling Jesus *not* to go to the cross!

And... think about *that*...

Had Peter’s so-called “leadership” been followed by Jesus... we sinners *would still* be not only helpless... *but also* hopeless!

But thanks be to God that Jesus... *didn’t* listen to Peter’s leadership! Roughly three years after this happened, Jesus followed the Father’s plan instead of Peter’s! He offered Himself on the cross as a Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world... including yours – **ALL OF THEM!**

Now... by grace through God-given faith... the forgiveness of sins that Jesus earned by His death & resurrection... *is yours!* All the times that you presumed leadership of your life... are forgiven in His blood! All the times that you willfully told Jesus to get in the back seat... and let you drive... are forgiven and forgotten!

So... day by day... as long as you inhabit this earth, repent of your sins and say “farewell” to your old sinful self. With God’s help, deny your sinful nature and follow Jesus... listening to *Him*. And please... please treat your relationship with Christ as your very most precious possession... *because it is!*

Perhaps this will help us see what can happen...

These portions of newspaper were printed in the Chicago *Tribune* some years ago. This was placed there by the Illinois State Treasurer.

Over 50K names are listed on these pages. But, at the time of printing – according to the treasurer’s office – just within Illinois there were over 5 *million* people whose names *should have been* listed! The names are of those who’ve walked away from bank accounts... or who never cashed paychecks or dividend checks that are rightfully theirs!

According to the website that I checked yesterday... over **\$3.5 Billion** in unclaimed property is waiting to be claimed!

We hear of that and say: **“How in the world could anyone walk away from a bank account or not cash their paycheck?”**

Yet... it happens! Every year these official public notices are published throughout our United States. We who struggle to scrape together a living... shake our heads in disbelief that *anyone* would *walk away* from something of value.

Yet, how many people could have *their* names printed in a similar sort of listing? This other listing would have the names of those who once had the greatest of treasures – faith in Jesus which gives forgiveness of sins and results in eternal life in heaven.

But... so many... *so very many*... walk away from *that* treasure that would endure into eternity. They abandon their faith... and chase after money... sports... a “fun life” (whatever *that* is)... and leave their heavenly treasure sitting by itself.

In their laziness... or their pursuit of pleasure or worldly fame & fortune... they quit reading their Bibles... they ignore God’s call to gather with other believers... to hear His Word proclaimed and to receive His Sacraments.

And... sadly... it *always* happens. Those who neglect that call of God... well... their faith becomes weaker and more fragile... and is put in dire danger of escaping them completely.

Dear Christians, regarding this... I quote our Lord Jesus: **“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?”** (Mt. 16:26, ESV) **“For what will it profit...”** if one has worldly riches... but hasn’t persevered in the one true faith?

People of God... we’ve been bought at a price. The precious blood of Jesus has redeemed us. Let us each... *daily*... remember our Baptism... deny ourselves, take up the cross of faith... and follow Christ throughout life... into death... and into eternal life!

In Jesus’ name... and for His sake! [Amen.]