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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 28, 2021
2nd Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Romans 5:1-11, Passion History: Gethsemane
Hymns: 155; 159; 421; 179

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Mark 8:31-38

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

³⁴ When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Point of View

What a difference that makes in how we see the world and how we see what is good and successful, or what is rather dismal, and failing. One person lives a simple life and is content and happy. It's the life of their dreams. Another person looks at the same lifestyle as being impoverished, and sad. We would not necessarily say that one or the other point of view is wrong, just different. Sometimes we address this by suggesting that one individual needs to walk a mile in another's shoes, meaning we should take a moment to try to see things from another person's perspective.

However, there are times when point of view is more than just different. There are times when it determines the life outcome in a positive or negative way; there are times when it reveals the nature of one's heart. That is when it is an expression of an entirely different world view. There is a Christian world view, and there is a natural world view. It sounds simple enough, but due to our immersion in the world around us which is to a degree unavoidable, and the resistance of our old adam, or sinful nature, we may find it rather challenging for us to "*set our minds on things above , not on things on the earth.*" (Colossians 3:2)

In this Lenten season we are focused on the gospel of Christ crucified which comes to us from the mind of God, which God in His grace and wisdom has instilled into the hearts of those who believe. This is the Lord's point of view and the source of our Christian world view. Flowing from this is the heart of love of our Savior Jesus Christ. In our text this morning we see the Lord's world view as --

THEME: Jesus Teaches Self-sacrifice.

We join Jesus during what is known as His Galilean ministry. During these months Jesus not only spent time visiting the towns and villages of the north country where He had grown up, but also spent more time in the private instruction of disciples. This is what was happening when --

I. Jesus Speaks of His Coming Death.

Mark 8:31-33 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

³² He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Jesus was open and speaking plainly concerning the events that would take place as His mission on earth drew to its closing climax. He had come to earth to suffer and die. It was going to happen at the hand of the Jewish council, and chief priests and scribes. The animosity, actually the contempt which they held for Jesus was evident. However, this was not the cause Jesus' death. He refers to Himself as the Son of Man in this lesson. That was a title from the Old Testament which Jesus used to emphasize His office as the Messiah. Jesus was teaching the disciples what it was that lay before Him. He was going to suffer many things at the hands of His enemies, be killed, and – AND -- rise again on the third day.

Jesus was presenting that heart of the gospel that is the focus of our Lenten meditation. Jesus would sacrifice His life as payment for the sins of the world. He would die, but He would also rise again. This reflected the will of God for our salvation. This is the Lord's world view. All must be accomplished to bring life and salvation to a fallen and sinful mankind. This was Jesus' express purpose and mission for life.

Peter had a different view of things. To Peter's ear this was not something he wanted to hear. To Peter's ear this sounded way too negative. From Peter's point of view Jesus could accomplish so much more in this world by staying alive, and asserting His authority as the Messiah, the **Ruler** of Israel. Peter took the Lord aside and began to rebuke Jesus. Peter took the Lord aside, but it was evident to all that Peter was setting the Lord Jesus straight on a few things. Matthew tells us that Peter went so far as to tell Jesus that these things shall not happen! (Matthew 16:22)

Think of how easily people lose sight of the necessity of the cross. It was only minutes earlier that Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But Peter's confession was distorted by his faulty worldview, and what Peter wanted to see happen.

Jesus' response was sharp and clear, and intended to clarify things for all the disciples. He even identified the source of Peter's words as coming from Satan! Peter, as well as the rest of the disciples, would have deterred Jesus from completing His mission which necessitated that Jesus sacrifice self for others. He identified this false view of the disciples as not being mindful of the things of God, but rather of being mindful of the things of man.

That is the confusion that we all struggle with in this life. We get a bit twisted in our thinking concerning what is truly beneficial for others. We are told repeatedly by the world that the things we are a calling wrong, are in fact right, and that what we call sin is an expression of individual rights and liberties, and should be embraced as expressions of love. We are told that we need to be more open minded, and to be an accepting religious community. To do otherwise is to reveal how bigoted and old fashioned we are.

The world view hasn't changed in all the millennia of recorded history. The same sins that we see promoted in our society today were embraced by the world in the days of Abraham. Indeed, one sees how God's world view was rejected by the nearly the entire world in the days of Noah. Always it has been the same; the here and now, the pleasure of the world, the sinful desires of the flesh, and material wealth, and the glory of man, **these** are the things that occupy and direct the mind of man, and determine the world's point of view. It is all about self and self-fulfillment, and not sacrifice!

We hear so often that one must be true to oneself that we have been worn down by it. The message of the cross and Jesus' sacrifice for sin is seen as foolishness, because in the world's view people are good and have no need of a sacrifice to redeem them from hell! That is not what it means to be one of His disciples! We must always be on our guard against being mindful of the things of this world and failing to be mindful of the things of God.

II. Jesus Calls His Disciples to Deny Self and Follow Him!

Mark 8:34 When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

We should note that Jesus broadens His audience for this part of His lesson. He called the people to Himself. Everyone needed to understand this lesson. True and eternal life is not found in **self-fulfillment**. We cannot live for the desires of our flesh, nor can we avoid all discomfort that may come from those who hold to the worldview of life on earth. If we are to be Jesus’ disciples then we should look to Him and remember what He has done. He denied self-interest. He sacrificed self for the good and blessing of others, of others who were less than He was. Remember in our epistle lesson how we were reminded, “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8) He gave Himself for us! When we appreciate the sacrifice Jesus made for us, a sacrifice that was made purely out of love and grace, a sacrifice made solely to gain for us salvation, then we shall seek to honor Him with our lives.

Jesus speaks not only of denying self, that is eschewing the physical comforts we may want in life, but Jesus also speaks to taking up our cross. Remember, this is in advance of Jesus’ crucifixion, after which we Christians have come to see the cross as a glorious symbol of our salvation. For Jesus’ audience that day the cross was a symbol of suffering and shame in people’s minds. In these words, Jesus is saying that following Him means that we also should be ready to endure shame from the world, and suffering. This is not talking about the general pain and suffering that befalls all people in life. This is talking about suffering shame for Jesus, suffering ridicule and even persecution because we are His disciples, because we are following Him and the truth of His Word.

Jesus also addresses the alternative: avoidance of any discomfort and following the world in a life of self-fulfillment and praise.

Mark 8:35-37 “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.

³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

If we should seek to "save our lives" by blending in with the crowd and being like the world, then the result will be our loss, the loss of our spiritual and eternal lives. It may indeed look great in this life if we gain the whole world, have wealth in abundance, successful careers, and stay **true to ourselves**, and reject this idea of self-sacrifice for the Lord. However, in the end would it have been worth it? Is a moment of glory in this life (remember this is life is but for a moment) is that moment of glory worth the forfeiture of glory for eternity? We must beware and avoid falling for the short-term benefits of this life. "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (v.37) Are we ready to sacrifice all things, even life itself as we follow Jesus?

Mark 8:38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

How is it possible that we feel such pressure from the world which we know is evil that we are even tempted to hide our relationship with Jesus, our faith in Jesus, our discipleship? It is Jesus' selfless love for us sinners that rescued us from eternal death in hell. He came down to earth to be our Brother; to be one of us He left the glory of heaven! He did this to endure the cross, the shame and the agony of the cross, and the ridicule of the world. He did that for us! And yet our flesh would lead us to fear being embarrassed by choices we make to glorify Jesus before the world! From this preserve us dear Father in Heaven.

Yes indeed, from this preserve us dear Father in heaven, for the consequences of be ashamed of Jesus is that He then will also be ashamed of us. When we stand before the judgment seat of God we want Jesus, Friend of sinners, standing by our side, making intercession for us before the throne of God. We would never want to hear Jesus say of any one of us, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you." (Matthew 25:12)

Jesus will come in the glory of His Father with all His holy angels!
May we look for that day with joyous anticipation. May we appreciate the wonder of grace that is found in Jesus' self-sacrifice for our salvation. May we follow Him and seek the blessings that come to those who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, deny self, and follow Him!

“Jesus! and shall it ever be
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

“Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heav'n depend?
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His Name.

“Till then—nor is my boasting vain—
Till then I boast a Savior slain;
And oh, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 346:1,4,6)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.