

Get Behind Me, Satan.

Those are some powerful words from Jesus. When we look at Jesus and Peter; we may feel more comfortable with Matthew's version of this story.

In that version, Jesus states: "upon this Rock, I will build my church"

As I have mentioned in the past, these two different views do not contradict. They simply look at the story from a different angle and focus on a different aspect of the conversation.

In verse twenty-nine, we see Peter exclaiming, "Jesus, you are the Messiah." Peter is the hero. But, four verses later, we hear the hard rebuke from Jesus.

For me, I think that we need to pay attention to Mark and examine carefully the reasoning behind Mark's version. For Mark, we are at the half-way point in his Gospel. The first part of his book has been about the teachings and healings of Jesus. We are about to see a shift in his writing. Mark now will take us on a journey. The journey that takes Jesus towards Jerusalem and leads to his gruesome death. Mark is very explicit in his book that the disciples over and over again will misunderstand Jesus and even deny that Jesus must die.

The misunderstanding and them denying that he must die was the reasoning behind Jesus strong words. Peter, right before those dreaded words, "Get Behind Me Satan" took Jesus to the side and rebuked Jesus. Jesus turns it around and rebukes Peter and then Jesus calls all the disciples and the crowd around and in the next five verses, we hear Jesus share with them what it means and what it takes to be a follower and a disciple of Jesus.

What we are beginning to see and sense is that Jesus has one definition and view of Messiahship and the disciples had a different point of view and understanding. The disciples struggled when their view has been challenged.

I think many of us can relate. When are view is challenged; especially ones that we have held onto our entire life, we struggle. Then, when we examine this in light of faith both as individuals and as a church community; what does it mean? I think that we, like Peter, may believe that Jesus is the Christ; **BUT** we may be completely mistaken about what that means.

The name of Jesus has been used by many followers to perpetrate many outrages and this occurred because they mistaken what it truly meant that Jesus is the Messiah; just like Peter.

So, what does Jesus share with the disciples and the crowd that is listening in? He gives them a three-part command.

One: Deny Self

Two: Take up the Cross

Three: Follow me

Here is where we may gulp and become a little uncomfortable. The cross statement is an obvious correlation to the crucifixion. The crucifixion was a punishment for the enemies of the Roman State. An individual would take up the cross, put it on their back and carrying to where they would be murdered.

We are almost two-thousand years away from this original text. So, we need to step back and step into the world of the first readers of this text. They would have their thoughts reassured that persecution and martyrdom was part of the paradox of life.

In Death – Gain in Loss – That is the way of Christ.

So, this week, I have been reflecting hard on the text and the commentaries that I used to develop the sermon. I have been thinking both on the words and the context of the story. The context may have actually been on my mind more than what Jesus said.

Over the last few months, in this congregation and in churches around the nation; many have asked and pondered the following: are people going to come back?

Will people come back to Bay View when Summer is over?

Will the children, youth and their parent come back to Bay View when Fall programming begins?

Will our members come back when the mask mandates are lifted?

Will the church attendance rise when the pandemic is finally over and people are comfortable coming back inside?

The number of articles that I am reading and the experts that I am listening in to say that across the nation, the answer is most likely no. We are not going to get back to normal or back to pre-Covid life. We have to be innovative.

So, I see this text and I see Jesus in the public spaces. He is engaging with his followers and the community in the public square. What does that mean for me, as the Pastor. What does that mean for you, as a church member? What can and what should we be doing to engage with those who are outside of the church building.

Jesus and the disciples were engaging with one another on the way. Discipleship was occurring while they were traveling. They were going. As they were going, they were listening to Jesus. They were observing him doing life and by doing that, they gained a greater understanding on what it meant to be a follower of Christ.

I am hoping and praying that maybe my presence in the community can help this. That is why I am attempting to be at community events and be involved in some community organizations.

It is also why Dori and I have switched some thoughts on ministry to our youth and looking at opportunities that will help them and their parents as they are on their journey's in their action-packed lives. These will include Spotify playlist for them and apps on their phone that will connect what we are doing on Wednesday's to their daily lives. Casting out that net.

Let me conclude by expanding on the commands that Jesus gave. Within those commands, we see that we are challenged to mutually serve, to advocate, to persist and to pursue justice.

Today is God's Work our Hands Sunday and today, we at Bay View **have (8am)** **had (11am)** the opportunity to connect where God is working by using our hands. Thousands of ELCA churches across the nation are joining us and we all are making a difference.

As we journey forward, may be continue to be challenged to love our God and Love on another and within that love, serve our community.

The most challenging aspect of our life might be what happened to Peter. We are tempted to refuse or accept Christ's authority over our lives. I want to officially conclude my sermon today on that word and expand it for us today.

In today's scripture, we see these verses:

35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. **36** For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? **37** Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

Life is probably not a very good translation but it is probably the best that we have in the English language. In phases, the more accurate thought would be:

the creatures center, one's inmost self.

The last six months, I have enjoyed watching and experiencing members of Bay View who truly live this concept out in their daily lives.

It is not the easy path, but may we continue to have the strength to take up our crosses daily. **AMEN.**