

August 31, 2008  
 Messiah  
 Pentecost 16 - A

Matthew 16:21-28  
 "Building our Lives on the Cross of Christ"

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### Introduction

1. You and I are very ready to give our opinion on our presidential candidate
2. And we are very ready to talk about our favorite football team
3. We are very ready to tell about our newest touch phone, our game cube, and our Wii
4. You are I are very ready to express our thoughts about gas prices, our teachers at school, our boss, and unfair taxes
5. But how quick are we to talk about Jesus, or to live our lives in Him?
6. Too often we build our lives on politics, sports, material things, and finances... and we do NOT build our lives on the Cross of Christ?
7. Yes – this is true for all of us.

### I. **Let's put this Gospel Reading into context...**

- A. Jesus had just asked the disciples: "who people say that I am?"
  - i. The disciples gave many and various answers: the truth be known – people did not know who Jesus was, or at least they did not believe what Jesus said about Himself coming from Heaven
  - ii. But then Peter gives this wonderful confession of faith that makes us all proud: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"
  - iii. Peter was right on – that's exactly who Jesus is
  
- B. But then our Gospel Reading picks up where that Confession leaves off
  - i. Right after Peter made that confession, Jesus says, "Yes! And now I must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and I will be killed. On the third day I will rise"
  - ii. And now – this same Peter who made this wonderful, doctrinal, confessional, Lutheran answer says, "Far be it from you, Lord! This will never happen to you"
  - iii. And Jesus says, "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."
  
- C. Like you and me – Peter was not building his life on the cross of Christ, but on the glory Peter thought Jesus was going to give him
  - i. Peter was thinking the Christ, the Son of the Living God would go to Jerusalem, set up a marvelous kingdom, and this, of course, this would not hurt Peter
  - ii. Think of it – if Jesus were king in Jerusalem, and Peter as a follower of this Jesus – Peter would not have to get up at 3 in the morning any more, take his boat out to sea, catch fish, take them to market, and then do the same thing the very next day just to pay his bills and put some food on the table

- iii. Maybe, just maybe, if Jesus were king, you know, the Son of the Living God, Peter could enjoy the finer things in life: think of the second home he could have on the Mediterranean, think of all the oil Peter could get from neighboring lands for his gas-powered chariot, think of the luxury and ease of life if Jesus were the Christ, the Son of the Living God!
- iv. How we are deceived when we think life is about all “the things” of world, and that Jesus is but a side-bar, a back-up, or just “nice” to have around

**II. Let’s go back to the words of Jesus, “I 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”**

- A. Many people in life suffer – what’s so special about Jesus?
- B. I was reading a book the other day about John’s McCain’s experience at the Hanoi Hilton – the name coined for the prison camp he lived for 6 years
  - i. He was bayoneted in the ankle and the groin, he was kicked and punched, he lived in solitary confinement for months and tied up, he had to crawl to the pail provided for his toilet
  - ii. No matter what side of the aisle you’re on – this is just inhumane, and no one would deny that this is truly human suffering
  - iii. McCain’s suffering, and the suffering of every other soldier, you would say, benefits us as they protect our lives of freedom in this nation...
- C. However, the suffering of no man or woman, anyone or anything benefits us as the suffering of Jesus Christ does
  - i. Being the Christ, the Son of the Living God – suffering the sins of Adam, and every descendant of Adam – secures our eternal freedom
  - ii. The suffering and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of Living God is not without purpose
    - 1. This is God, who came to earth, to take the pains of our sin and death into his own flesh to take away all our sins
    - 2. And we will remember – sin damns us, the sin into which we are conceived and the sin we commit everyday bars us from heaven
    - 3. But Jesus comes, and His suffering and death on the cross is the key to heaven, and through Him, and through Him ONLY – is the gate of heaven open to us
    - 4. We deserved the torture of hell because of our rebellion; but we have received the pure gift of paradise solely through Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, as our substitute
- D. We look at that cross – and we confess, “It is upon the Cross of Christ upon which I build my life”
  - i. My home, my car, my grandchildren, my new church building, my sports team, my techno toys, my fame, my glory, my popularity – all these things pale in comparison to this great gift of Jesus Christ –

- ii. And not only did He die for me, He rose – and because He rose, in my Baptism, I too have eternal life – forever in heaven with the Lamb of God, the saints and angels, and all those who died in the faith
- iii. Even on the Last Day – Christ will call us from the dead, and we shall be raised – a gift not possible without first the Cross of Christ

III. **And now Jesus continues to tell Peter and the disciples what it means to build their lives on the Christ, the Son of the Living God**

A. Building our lives on the Christ, the Son of the Living god – means to “deny self”

- i. Life is NOT about who “I am” – but who Christ is
- ii. Denying myself means that I do not have the world revolve around me...
- iii. But My life revolves around Christ – feeding on His Word and His Body and Blood, and living my life in my love toward my neighbor
- iv. This love and denial is lived in my obedience to my parents, my submission to the laws of the land, my charity in caring for my neighbor with cancer, my time in helping a child with school work rather getting my weekly fix of “Deal or No Deal”
- v. We don’t deny ourselves in order to “pay Jesus back” for denying Himself for us...
- vi. We deny ourselves and put others before our own needs because Christ’s gift of denial is unmatched, and our lives are devoted to a God who gifted us with His self-sacrifice for our salvation

B. Building our lives on the Christ, the Son of the Living God – means “not gaining the world, and therefore forfeiting our souls

- i. When we think being a Christ should make us prosperous – we are only “using” God for our success
- ii. When we place our homes, cars, recreation, gadgets, trips, and home décor before God – we have turned these things into idols we literally worship
- iii. You and I are so weak – and the world is so tempting; we gamble with a lifetime of fun for an eternity in hell
- iv. We remember the Christ who gave up the world in order to give us heaven – toys and touch-phones, diamonds and jeans did not buy our salvation → it was blood, the death of the Jesus, and His resurrection
- v. We repent and plead God’s forgiveness for our sins, and we pray His strength and power to put the world aside and to believe our lives absorbed in the True God who gifted us by making us holy and pure in His sight
- vi. Building our lives on the cross of Christ is to put life into perspective, believing and confessing the “real treasure” – Jesus Christ!
- vii. And the difficult task for every parent and the church, is to help our children, growing up in this materialized-generation to see who the

“real God” is – and to see beyond the lights on a phone to the Light of the World!

### **Conclusion**

1. Jesus Christ has made us different than what we used to be: we are no longer dead in sin, but alive in Christ; we are no longer damned to eternal hell, but blessed with eternal life
2. Peter came to know and understand all the more – this Jesus who tasted death for us all that we may feast at the banquet of heaven forever – Peter came to understand His confession
3. Confessing Jesus as the “Christ, the Son of the Living God” – is to know Jesus as our Savior, rescuing us from death and the devil, and living our lives in Him who is God alone!
4. This cross is not only the most powerful instrument of our salvation – it defines who Christ is, and it defines who we are
5. We are not ashamed, and we confess boldly, “I build my life on the Cross of Christ” – because Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God! Amen.