

9/6/26

Sermon Title: From Confession to Discipleship

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

In the imperial city of Caesarea Philippi, filled with temples dedicated to pagan gods, Peter answered Jesus’ question about His identity on behalf of the disciples: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

By this confession, Peter was declaring that the true Lord of the world is not the Roman emperor Caesar, but God; that Jesus is not merely a human being, but the Savior who would save us from our sins and the Creator God Himself.

Such a confession is not something anyone can make on their own.

No one can understand the things of God through human wisdom alone.

It is a confession that can be made only by those to whom God has revealed the truth.

After hearing Peter's confession of faith, Jesus moved on to a deeper level of training in discipleship.

For the first time, Jesus began to tell the twelve disciples about the work He was about to accomplish—His suffering, death on the cross, and resurrection.

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

These words must have sounded like a bolt from the blue to the disciples.

They had been following Jesus for several years, believing that He would become the King of the world.

They had abandoned their livelihoods and left everything behind to follow Him.

They had left their boats, their fishing nets, and even their families behind, and had committed their entire lives to Jesus.

But now, the very Jesus in whom they had placed their faith and upon whom they had staked their entire lives was suddenly telling them that He was going to be killed.

How could they possibly believe such a thing?

It must have been utterly shocking to them.

What, then, would become of them?

Jesus did say that He would be raised on the third day, but they could not even take those words in.

They could not imagine or accept a Messiah who would suffer and die.

This was not the picture of their Savior that they had expected or desired.

Jesus did not come to this earth to wear a golden crown, dress in royal robes, and rule as an earthly king.

He came to die on the cross, to make atonement for the sins of us who are sinners. But Peter did not understand this.

He was looking at Jesus from a purely human perspective.

Although the disciples had confessed their faith correctly with their lips, they still did not fully understand who Jesus was, why He had come to this earth, or what His ministry was truly about.

They did not understand that Jesus had come as the suffering Servant to redeem humanity from sin.

They would not fully understand these things until after they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him.

In his anger, Peter protested strongly and tried to correct Jesus.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

After hearing Jesus’ words, Peter spoke as though he could somehow prevent these things from happening.

He firmly expressed his determination, saying, “This will never happen to You. This must never happen to You.”

Then Jesus rebuked Peter.

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Jesus said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!”

Jesus was not saying that Peter himself was Satan.

Rather, He meant that Peter had become a tool through which Satan was working. In other words, Satan was using Peter in an attempt to make Jesus stumble and turn Him away from the path He had been called to take.

Satan was cleverly setting a trap through Peter in order to hinder and obstruct Jesus’ ministry.

Nevertheless, Satan could never cause Jesus to stumble or defeat Him.

Jesus said to Peter, “You are a stumbling block to me.”

In other words, “You have become an obstacle in my way.”

Jesus was rebuking Peter because he was not thinking about the things of God—the things God had planned and ordained in His providence.

Instead, Peter was thinking about human concerns.

He could not understand that Jesus had to go up to Jerusalem, suffer, and die according to God’s plan.

Just moments earlier, Peter had received the name Cephas, or Peter, meaning “rock,” because of his correct confession of faith.

But now, Peter had become a tool of Satan and had turned into another kind of rock—not a rock upon which something could be built, but a stumbling block that could cause someone to fall.

(1 Peter 2:8) and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

Just as Satan had tried to offer Jesus glory and kingship without suffering, Peter had now become an obstacle to Jesus' ministry by trying to keep Him from the path of suffering.

Here, Jesus begins to teach His disciples what true discipleship means.

Jesus teaches that becoming His true disciple requires self-denial and active obedience, even in the midst of hardship and adversity.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Jesus knew that the road ahead for His disciples would not be easy.

Just as Jesus would suffer, they too would suffer.

Yet the disciples were still so inadequate and immature in their faith that Jesus had to teach them that following Him would require complete obedience and a willingness to suffer for His sake.

Jesus tells them that the first step toward becoming His disciple is to deny themselves.

This means completely surrendering their selfish desires and thoughts, as well as their corrupt old self—the sinful nature inherited from the old Adam.

Ever since the fall of Adam, the human mind, emotions, and will have been corrupted by sin.

With this sinful nature ruling our lives, we cannot truly become disciples of Jesus. If self-denial is the first, more passive aspect of becoming a disciple, Jesus tells us that we must also take the active step of taking up our own cross.

In those days, the Jewish people had often witnessed condemned criminals carrying their crosses to the place of execution.

Therefore, they understood very well what it meant to take up one's cross.

A true disciple must follow in the footsteps of Jesus, accepting the difficult and painful path of suffering as a sacred privilege—with holy joy, overwhelming gratitude, and deep thanksgiving—and regarding it as the most worthwhile and valuable calling in life.

And having chosen that path, we must follow Him faithfully to the very end.

²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Here, the word “life” does not refer merely to physical life.

It also refers to the soul, the center of a person’s character and being, and even one’s very self.

Therefore, when a person seeks to save his own life, it means clinging excessively to himself—fearing the loss of physical life or holding tightly to his personal identity, including his intellect, will, and emotions.

Ultimately, this is contrary to denying oneself, and it results in the loss of eternal life.

But when we let go of our self, crucify our old self, and surrender it to death, we will instead experience the joy and glory of eternal life at the end of the age.

A true disciple of Jesus needs the courage of faith to decisively give up this temporary life for the sake of eternal life.

Even if we were to possess everything this world has to offer, what good would it be if we failed to receive salvation and lost eternal life?

We must choose what has eternal value.

Jesus then declares that on the last day, He will come again with royal authority and sit as the Judge to judge all people.

²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Jesus is speaking about the final judgment.

He will come with the angels, sit upon His glorious throne, and execute judgment.

He will repay each person according to what he or she has done.

Although salvation is a gift of God's grace, each individual will nevertheless stand before God at the end of the age and give an account for how he or she has lived in this present world.

Finally, Jesus leaves His disciples with a rather puzzling statement.

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

There have been various interpretations of these words of Jesus.

However, it is reasonable to understand them as referring to the ways in which Jesus would go on to fully fulfill His promise: He would overcome the power of death and rise in glory on the morning of the resurrection; through the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, He would come to dwell forever in the hearts of His people; and, seated at the right hand of God, He continues to personally rule over His church and bring His promise to its ultimate fulfillment.

In this sense, Jesus' words point not to a single event, but to the continuing fulfillment of His promise through His resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit, His present reign over the church, and ultimately His return in glory.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

The path of discipleship is never an easy one.

We must give up the path we want to take and choose the path that God wants us to take.

There is suffering on that path.
At times, it requires sacrifice.

Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

To deny ourselves means to completely surrender the lordship of our lives to God. It means laying down our own will, our own self, and our own pride at the foot of the cross.

To take up our cross means willingly bearing the weight of the calling God has entrusted to us, while accepting the misunderstanding, rejection, and disadvantages that may come because we choose to follow the Lord.

Our faith must not end with a confession of our lips.

If we confess that Jesus is the Christ, then we must follow the path He walked.

If we confess that Jesus is our Lord, then we must surrender the lordship of our lives completely to Him.

If we confess that Jesus is our Savior, then we must deny ourselves, take up our cross each day, and follow Him.

The way of the cross is a way of sacrifice, but it is never a way of failure.

Beyond the cross is the glory of the resurrection.

And waiting for us is the eternal life that the Lord gives.

What good would it be to gain the whole world and yet lose true life?

Therefore, do not give up what is eternal for the sake of things that are temporary and passing away.

Deny yourself each day.

Take up your cross each day.

And no matter what suffering or hardship you may face, follow to the very end the path of life that our Lord walked.

Choose God's glory over the glory of this world!

Choose God's will over your own will!

And may you and I, when we stand before our Lord, hear Him say,

"Well done, good and faithful servant."

May we all become faithful disciples who receive that commendation from our Lord.

I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ.