

The title for today's message is: **“What was he thinking?”**

Jesus said: **“Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me;**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

There's an old television commercial I remember that shows a guy going off a tall waterfall in a kayak.

He's screaming all the way to the bottom as he bounces off rocks along the canyon wall and finishes his plunge into the waters below.

Then the camera pans off to a couple standing by their go-anywhere, climb any mountain, cross any river sport utility vehicle that has been watching this strange sight.

The fellow then turns to his female companion, shakes his head in utter disbelief and says, “What was he thinking?”

I'm quite sure that pretty well summarizes what Peter was saying to himself when Jesus got done describing what He was going to endure as the Christ.

Look, Peter had just confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. So, what's all this talk about going to Jerusalem to die? Why that's crazy.

His enemies are there, lying in wait; and yet He seems so set on going there to suffer rejection, brutal beatings, humiliation, and death.

This can never happen. It can never happen to Him. What's He thinking?
And yet it's clear.

In his shock over the bitter things that Jesus was to endure Peter missed the good news, but it was there. Yes Jesus would be rejected.

Yes He would suffer many things at the hands of the chief priests and the elders of the people. And yes, they would succeed in taking His life.

But here's what Peter seems to have missed. On the third day Jesus would rise from the dead and be declared the victor over sin, and death.

On the third day forgiveness, new life and salvation would be guaranteed to all who looked to Him and to His cross in faith.

God's plan to right Satan's wrong that had been wreaked on the world would now be complete. What was He thinking?

He was thinking of the joy set before Him, the joy of heaven for you and me. That's right, He was thinking of you and me from the very beginning.

When He created the world with all its splendor and beauty, when He created the animals, the trees, the oceans, the mountains, the birds that fly, the sun and the sky, He was thinking of you and me.

When He issued His laws explaining right from wrong, rules designed to make life better, He was thinking of you and me.

When He entered the hearts of men, and gave them words to write that help us know the mind of God, He was thinking of you and me.

And when He sent His only Son into the world to show us how to live, He was thinking of you and me.

So, it's no wonder then, that when this same Son carried a cross up a lonely hill and died for the sins of the world, He was thinking of you and me.

When they laid Him in the tomb, when He rose up from the grave, when He invited sinners to lay their burdens down, and find rest in Him; again, He was thinking of you and me.

The truth is, God is always thinking of you and me, of Peter, of the 12, and of all who faithfully believe in Him.

Even though the words He uses in our text for today, ***“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”***, are extremely harsh, and hard to bear.

He was thinking of His disciples, as well as you and me here today. Now, these words were certainly tough for Peter.

Not only were they contrary to his expectations of Jesus but they were also deflating for him personally. Peter had visions of glory.

Not only did he imagine Jesus as a great earthly power to be reckoned with around the world; he had great expectations for himself.

After all, he had been the first to recognize Jesus as the Christ and Jesus had called him “the rock” upon which He would build His church.

He must have thought, being a member of this crowd had great potential for gaining influence, power, and personal well-being.

But now, all of this was taken away he thought. All of his dreams of grandeur were being replaced with nightmares of a shame filled cross.

And he, who had been hailed “The Rock” among the disciples, was just as quickly afforded the title of “stumbling, bumbling fool.”

Tough words, but let's not forget that they're tough words of grace. What we see here is not scorn. It's not ridicule.

It's tough love. It's tough grace, poured out and dispensed on Peter and through Matthew's Gospel it's also dispensed on all of us.

It's tough because it stings with a sharp message of the law that exposes the cheap brand of Christianity that we often times foolishly buy into.

By cheap Christianity I mean the attempt we sometimes make at discipleship with commitment.

I'm talking about worship without the recognition that we've fallen short of what God requires. I'm talking about forgiveness without repentance.

I'm talking about fellowship without a common confession of faith. I'm talking about the expectation that one can be a member of the body of Christ while persistently living a life that denies Him.

Cheap Christianity is a faith that expects to live apart from God's Word. It's a faith that treats God, and His cross as if they were nothing but a cheap gift from a Five and Dime.

When in fact they're given at enormous cost. There's nothing cheap about our Christian faith, nor the grace God gives us through His Son Jesus Christ.

It comes by the great cost of God's own Son who delivered Himself up on the cross for the great joy of giving us life everlasting in return.

And as Jesus points out in our text we can expect that cross to be shared by us who are bound to Him by faith.

We'll have a share in it as we wrestle to do what is right with a sinful nature that's inclined to do what's wrong.

We'll struggle with the expectations of our peers that run contrary to those of God. We'll come face to face with the laughter and scorn of a faithless world.

That's why this love and grace of God is so tough. It's tough in that it brings us to recognize that we're already sinners who, like Peter, have let our Lord and Savior down.

And yet it's grace as it recalls us to the forgiveness of Christ. It's tough in that it calls us to live a life that is not ruled by the things and thoughts of men.

And yet it's also filled with grace in that it directs our faith to rest in promises already kept.

It calls us to a hope that has already been confidently confirmed in Jesus' own cross, and resurrection to a new and blessed life.

Yes, Jesus endured the cross and scorned its shame, and because of the joy of Satan's demise, sin and death was defeated, and our salvation won.

We can do the same. We can count it all joy when we lose a job, or miss an opportunity to advance in our work.

All because we dared to live our faith before others. We can count it joy because of the eternal advances and rewards that awaits us.

Now I'm not going to pretend today to have all the answers to every trial that comes our way.

Like Peter, I sometimes catch myself wondering, "What was He thinking" when He sent this or that my way?

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Like Peter, I sometimes catch myself wondering, "What was He thinking" when He sent this or that my way?

What was He thinking when He laid this dilemma at my feet?" I don't always know. But this, this I do know.

Blessings are not found in a life without a cross. They're found in Him who has traveled the way of the cross with us.

They're found in Him who still holds His cross' victory of life before us, a victory that guarantees our salvation.

And when I turn my eyes upon this Jesus, and look full into His wonderful face.

I find myself not wondering so hard or so long, because through it all He's still thinking of you and me.

Amen!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy spirit be with us all forever. Amen.