

The title for today's message is; **"What Will I Get Out Of It?"**

Jesus said; ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."***

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

Peter was always doing it. He was always out in front of the other disciples putting his foot into his mouth.

For example; in verse 27 Jesus asked His disciples "Who do people say I am.

The disciples answered: ***"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."***

And after hearing this, Jesus asked His disciples the same question. He said: ***"What about you? Who do you say I am?"***

This time Peter spoke out saying; ***"You are the Christ,"*** which in the Greek, means the Messiah, so this was a big confession on Peter's part.

For over a thousand years the Jewish people have been waiting for the Messiah to come. And its Peter who is the first to recognize the Messiah.

The Jews, including Peter, and the other disciples expected great things from the Messiah, things that were promised to there forefathers.

And that's why Peter was so excited by his own confession, if Jesus is the Messiah, there would be a lot in it for Peter, according to Peter that is.

Now, according to Jewish expectations, the Messiah would come to destroy Israel's enemies, and restoring Israel, as He ushers in peace.

So Peter must have been beside himself, so many thoughts running through his mind. Wondering what Jesus would do for him.

But once again Peter got it wrong, Jesus certainly had different reasons for coming to earth, bursting Peter's bubble.

Its as if Jesus said to Peter: "Yes I am the Messiah, but I'm not the kind of Messiah you and the other's are expecting.

I'm a Messiah who: ***must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes...***

But more importantly, I must: ***be killed, and after three days rise again.*** Well, as far as Peter was concerned this wasn't going to happen.

Peter was going to protect Jesus, so he was set on correcting Jesus, you know, setting Him straight.

Once again Peter steps out and single handedly rebukes Jesus as the other disciples stood there, watching in silence, maybe in shock.

As you can imagine, Jesus was angered by this, so He said to Peter: ***"Get behind me, Satan!" "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."***

Now were not told how Peter responded to Jesus' rebuke, but I think its safe to say, that he was at least dumbfounded.

Now to be fare to Peter, he wasn't the only one who got it wrong regarding the Messiah. All the Jews of the day had the same beliefs as Peter.

And this is why today's gospel lesson should make us think, it certainly does for me every time I read it.

Just think, Peter, a man actually living with the Messiah, had everything

Just as Christians today, we too connect the Messiah to our own desires, and we too have it all backwards?

Now, today we hear all kinds of proclamations of the Christian faith with the emphasis being much like Peter's.

Many still ask today, **What Will I Get Out Of It?** They say, if we believe in Jesus, we will experience a renewed and powerful sense of our own self.

And if we believe in Jesus, all our physical ailments will leave us instantly. Right there on the spot.

And if we believe in Jesus, all our enemies, everyone of them, will be destroyed, right before our eyes, that very moment.

And finally, if we believe in Jesus, all our financial needs shall be met, that is of course, as long as we give money to their ministries.

We've all heard these promises, and many more. Were told, we have everything to gain, and absolutely nothing to lose, that everything is rosy.

But according to Mark's gospel, Jesus rejected this "What-Will-I-Get-Out-Of-It" version of Christianity.

Jesus rejected Peter's interpretation of the Messiah, and He will reject any such notions we may have today. Remember, Jesus said to Peter: **"Get behind me, Satan!"**

Well it seems pretty clear that Jesus was angry with Satan, not Peter. How dare Satan have Peter rebuke Him.

Satan would like nothing more than to do battle with Jesus and all of His followers. And he tried to do just that, by having Peter rebuke Jesus.

Here again Satan is trying to tempt Jesus, just like he tried when Jesus was in the wilderness, right after Jesus was Baptized.

Here Satan was trying to get Jesus to look at His ministry and wonder what's in it for Him. But Jesus resisted Satan's temptations and said; ***Away from me, Satan!***

Here Jesus remained obedient to God. Through Peter's words, however, that old voice of temptation came to Jesus again.

I can just hear Peter saying: You don't have to suffer, Kings don't suffer! Stick with us and You can have it all.

Jesus then tells Peter why He said this, He said; ***"You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."***

Sound familiar? Isn't this what we say more often than not? We seem to think of all the worldly things, before we think of Godly things.

So, what's in it for us? Well, Jesus said; ***"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."***

Here Jesus issues a call to all people of the world, a call to a suffering service. Jesus never said, follow Me and everything will be rosy.

And like Peter, we too, are faced with temptations similar to those which Jesus faced.

Were tempted by one voice to think only of ourselves and to follow the path that promises immediate rewards and satisfaction.

This always seems to be our primary focus, after all, why would anyone want to follow a suffering God?

But when we do that, when we put ourselves first, we deny the very purpose of our creation

In the Bible's creation story, Eve was made for Adam because it was not good for Adam to be alone.

Human life was and is, intended to be life in fellowship, and in community with other people, all the while attending to their needs.

And, Jesus underscored this reality when He was asked about, which is the greatest commandment of the law.

Jesus answered: ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*** And; ***Love your neighbor as yourself.***

Yes my friends, as you can see, we were not created for our own pleasure, but for God's pleasure.

So, when we focus our lives around the question, "What Will I Get Out Of It?" were not only sinning but were living in sin.

And then there's another voice, the voice of Jesus, calling us to a life of suffering for the sake of God, the gospel and for others.

Here, Jesus calls out to all sinners and bids us to repent, to take up our own cross, and meet the needs of others.

And the good news in this call is that Jesus has walked this way of life ahead of us. That means when we walk down this road were not alone.

When we focus our lives on God and other people, we follow in the path that Jesus walked.

And His pain is the pain we endure. His cross is the cross we shall carry, and His death is the death that we die.

And, finally, triumphantly, His resurrection is the new life we share with God for all eternity.

Truly, it is said, that its in losing our lives in the service of God and others that we truly find ourselves.

So ask yourself, which voice will you heed? It's a question you can answer easily, its the voice which proclaims, Eternity.

Don't be fooled by Christians who seem willing to offer you a version of Christianity that focuses primarily on your own gain here on earth.

Or be mislead by Christians who offer you a cross-less version of Christianity, where they say, you can have victory without the cross.

All these versions of Christianity are nothing but false obedience to God and His will.

So, we must say to such temptations, the same thing Jesus said to Peter. "Get behind me, Satan in the name of My Lord and savior Jesus Christ!"

God turns our question and our expectation of life upside down. God in Jesus Christ offers us personal victory through taking up our cross.

Its in taking up our cross, a symbol of death, that we find life. Its in losing our lives for the sake of God and the gospel, that we find our lives.

Its in giving, that we receive. Its in losing that we win, and its in dying that we are born to eternal life. And so we take up our cross.

We give our lives away as we walk the path of suffering with Jesus, and our lives are given back to us for all eternity.

That my friends is what's in it for you and me and all believers in Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of