

Get Behind Me, Jesus!

Matthew 16:21-23

Summary

In Matthew 16:21-23, Jesus privately reveals to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed, and be raised from the dead. Peter, operating under a deeply rooted misconception of what the Messiah should be, pulls Jesus aside to rebuke Him. Jesus corrects Peter's mindset, showing that avoiding the cross aligns with the things of man and Satan, rather than the things of God. This passage challenges us to examine our hearts and ask whether we are truly following Jesus or expecting Him to follow us.

Sermon Outline

I. Introduction

1. Today is Palm Sunday, the day Jesus entered Jerusalem, starting passion week which culminates next Sunday with Jesus' resurrection.
2. People humbly laid down their cloaks and palm branches on the road before Him, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 21:9).
3. Quoting Psalm 118:25-26, the crowds were acknowledging Jesus as the long-awaited deliverer and crying out for Him to save them.
4. The crowds wanted the Messiah to act according to their hopes and dreams and follow their plans.
5. Jesus came to fulfill God's mission, leading the crowds to eventually turn on Him and cry out for His crucifixion.
6. Peter shared this same misconception. He had a wonderful plan for Jesus' life that excluded suffering and death.
7. We have our own agendas and plans that we expect Jesus to get on board with, praising Him when He leads our way, but pulling Him aside to correct Him when things do not go according to our plan. It's as if we say to him, "Get behind me, Jesus! Let me show you how to be king."
8. The ultimate question we must wrestle with is: "Am I following Jesus, or am I expecting Him to follow me?"

II. The Mission (Matthew 16:21)

1. Jesus expresses the "must" of complete resolve, voluntarily heading toward Jerusalem to execute the strategic plan He and the Father agreed upon in eternity past.

2. This “divine must” was planned from eternity past, prophesied in the Old Testament, and fulfilled through Jesus. (Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 1:19-20, Ephesians 3:11)
3. **He Must Go to Jerusalem:** Jesus had to go to the center of Israel's religious and political life to offer Himself as the final sacrifice for sins during Passover.
4. **He Must Suffer:** He must suffer from the Sanhedrin – the elders, chief priests, and scribes. Fulfilling Psalm 118:22, these religious leaders would use their authority to unjustly arrest, torture, and condemn the Author of the very Scriptures they studied.
5. **He Must Be Killed:** Our complete rebellion and separation from God are laid out clearly in scripture, including Isaiah 53:6, 59:2, Romans 3:10-12, and Romans 3:23. Because the wages of sin is death and God's righteous wrath (Romans 2:5, Romans 6:23), the absolute justice of God requires a life, and blood must be shed to pay for our cosmic treason. Jesus came to be the propitiation for our sins – the perfect sacrifice that completely absorbs the wrath of God and satisfies His justice (Isaiah 53:5, Romans 3:24-26). Thus, at the cross, His justice and mercy meet.
6. **He Must Be Raised:** A Savior that remained dead could do us no good, leaving our cosmic debt completely unpaid. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 that if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile. The resurrection is the eternal receipt that proves the infinite currency of Christ's blood was accepted as payment in full (Romans 4:25, Colossians 2:13-15).

III. The Misconception (Matthew 16:22)

1. Peter takes the Creator of the universe by the arm, pulls Him aside privately, and sternly rebukes Him. Peter had a deeply rooted misconception, possessing a foundational paradigm for the Messiah that was completely incompatible with a cross.
2. Like Peter, our own expectations often make us deaf to God's promises.
3. When life does not go according to our plans regarding our health, finances, careers, and relationships, we “pull Jesus aside” and correct Him.
4. We hold a flawed view of reality, believing a loving God owes us a comfortable, easy, predictable life, and we assume our wonderful plan is better than His.

IV. The Mindset (Matthew 16:23)

1. Jesus returns Peter's strong word right back, identifying Peter as a hindrance and a stumbling block on the path to the cross.
2. By opposing Jesus' death, Peter unknowingly became a spokesman for Satan, echoing the Great Adversary's wilderness temptation to bypass the cross (Matthew 4).
3. Peter's mindset evaluated the King of the universe through the lens of his own temporary comfort and political desires.
4. Peter was deciding what was best, actively standing in the way of the cross, and trying to sit on the throne in the kingdom he had envisioned.

V. Application

Three ways to fight the daily temptation to expect Jesus to follow us.

1. **Adjust your mindset:** Our flesh causes our hearts to reset each day to selfishness, envy, greed, pride, and the assumption that our thoughts are higher than God's. We must intentionally recalibrate our minds daily, seeking the things that are above where Christ is seated (Colossians 3:1-3). Give your eyes the habit of looking upward all day through regular scripture reading, biblical podcasts, Bible memory, and faithful home group attendance.
2. **Submit your plans:** We are like a toddler trying to shove a finger into an electric socket; we think our idea is brilliant, but the Father knows what will ultimately hurt us. Make your plans, but lay those hopes and dreams daily at the feet of Jesus, trusting that He is conforming you into His image and working all things for your good.
3. **Take Up your Cross:** Jesus telling Peter to "Get behind me" is an invitation of grace for a disciple to get back into their proper place. If you want to follow the King, you do not get to sit on the throne. You are called to pick up your cross, die daily, and walk the exact same path of surrender and sacrifice that your Savior walked.