

The Messiah's Sacrifice

By Rev. Arnoud T. Vergunst

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Matthew 16
Preached on: Sunday, March 5, 2017

Netherlands Reformed Congregation

W10890 Dead End Street
Waupun, WI 53963
USA

Website: www.nrcwaupun.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/atvergunst

Pastors recall it, John the Baptist standing on the Jordan, by the River Jordan, Bethabara, as the lambs were crossing the river, he pointed it out, "Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." The next day he does it again, "Behold, the Lamb of God," and that became the changing moment for John and for James. They followed him and they introduced Peter on the next day, "We have found the Messiah." From that day, Jesus, Peter, James, John and the others became inseparable, and for the last two years, had walked with Jesus through all the corners of Galilee and Judea, Samaria, and they had listened to him, he's been opening to them a new world. To be saved is to walk into a new world. That wasn't always so comfortable for the disciples in those first two years. You notice that in this first part of the chapter, Jesus begins to be very clear to them finally. He says, "Brothers, you've got to quit this Sadducees' and Pharisees' doctrine. Let that go now and be careful with that doctrine, that it is poison, it's wrong, it's a leaven you ought not to embrace."

You see, that was not a comfortable journey, friends. Remember, these are all young men who have been growing up in the church for all their years and here this new rabbi begins to speak about God in a totally different way. He calls God, "Abba." That's the Hebrew word that every child would say to their father, "Papa." You see, you would be a little offended if I would pray to Papa, right? You'd say, "That is not right." That's what Jesus did. Abba. Not the Jehovah, the Yahweh, the unpronounceable name. He spoke about God as Father. That's unsettling for the disciples. He has a whole different approach to the Sabbath keeping. He's completely different the way he interprets the Sabbath day. No, no, not less holy, more holy but differently. More of the love and of the charity and not these hundreds of rules that have been added to keep the Sabbath day, a burden for the people of Israel. He's been teaching them about sin, about the need to be born again. About worshiping God.

No, every part of that new teaching is uncomfortable. Why is that uncomfortable? Because I have to let go of what I always thought was the way to think. I have to begin to think in a different way and that is not comfortable. It still is not. That's what the disciples experienced as Jesus challenged everything that they'd always heard. You know that Sermon on the Mount, he says it repeatedly, he says that phrase, "You have heard it was said by them of old time. Your forefathers have always taught this, didn't they? Yeah.

Well, I will teach you this." Similar what they experienced is what you will experience. You know, you may have been for 20-30 years in the word and you've been maybe for 20-30 years in a church. You have listened for 20-30-40 years to sermons and when God begins to work, it will all become totally different than you ever thought it was. It doesn't go the way you think it goes. The things that you thought were A are not A. It is an amazing experience to experience this opening of the mind for the truth of God and slowly on Jesus is chipping away at all these wrong thinking patterns and these doctrines of the Pharisees and the scribes that these disciples, of course, all had embraced over the years of their lives. And Jesus has no difficulty putting away traditions. They were as sacred as sacred could be. The way he treats women made many disciples very uncomfortable. Think of that Samaritan woman that he talked to. "Lord, that's not right. Shouldn't be doing that like that." But Jesus did.

Now in those two years, you have to remember that the faith in who Jesus was is increasing. At first he was a rabbi. At first he was a rabbi that took their attention. And the Lamb of God, John the Baptist spoke about that, and that caught their attention too. And then as James and John are sharing with Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah." That all he spoke to their appeal, that spoke to their heart because the Jews were expecting that. And those last two years of this journey of their life, their faith in Jesus has been growing.

Notice in chapter 16 when Jesus asked the disciples, "Finally, what do you say I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Messiah. Thou art the Christ, the Son," isn't that what he says, "The Son of the living God. Thou art not just a man." Peter is convinced of that. He's seen the miracles of Jesus, heard Jesus teaching. He's interacted for these two years with Jesus. He knows he's more than a man. "Thou art the Son of God, the living God, the Son of Jehovah."

He said that will become your confession. For Peter that meant, "Thou art our only hope." For Peter that meant, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." For Peter that meant, "I do not know where else to go to. All my hope for this life and for the life to come is placed on this precious Master Jesus."

But now you notice in verse 21, it is time for Jesus to open the last chapter he has not opened yet. We're about six months away from Jesus' death at this point in Matthew 16, and Jesus now begins to open up, as you notice in verse 21, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer and die." This new chapter, congregation, is going to lead these disciples to a higher understanding and a greater faith in who Jesus is, but that never goes without going to the valley first. If you've ever traveled in the mountains and you know if you want to get to the next mountaintop it must be higher than what you're on right now, there is not a straight beeline, there is only a way to go down first before you go back up to get to the next mountain ridge. I'll show you this spiritually. For God to lead you to an higher level of spiritual understanding, count on it, you will go down in the valley first. We go from strength to strength Psalm 84 says, but between strength and strength or height and height

and height lies the valley, the low point, the unsettling moment, the stripping away moment, and they can be very fearful.

We see that in our text words tonight. Let's read our text words again from verse 21 to 23 and let us tonight consider these truths that are taught there.

21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Let's meditate together on this passage in terms of the Messiah's sacrifice. It's a must. It's needed. "I must go through Jerusalem," he says. Secondly, it's resistant. Peter in verse 22 took Jesus and rebuked him. And then lastly, it is committed to, and in verse 23 I didn't find a better word than the word "committed" but Jesus turns around and he rebukes Satan, "Satan, get out of my sight." He is committed to go to the way through Jerusalem to die and to be raised again.

So first then, Jesus says that his sacrifice as Messiah is needed. Now it's hard for us to imagine the shock, the shock that the disciples felt when Jesus said this. This topples over their entire expectation about the Messiah. Yeah, we have heard that before undoubtedly but the Messiah expectation among the Jews is that he would be a man like David and that, of course, is enough reason for that because God speaks about David's son. David was a big man, children. David was a strong man. David was a man who could handle the sword of Goliath. That was a big sword. David might have been as tall as Saul and Saul, we know, was a head taller than everybody else. David was not just a little boy and a small little man, he's a big man, strong man. Of course, that's fitting for a king, right? You want to have a strong man to be our leader. Now David was that. Now the Jews were thinking that the Messiah to come would also be like that for wasn't he going to beat the Romans? And wasn't he going to restore Israel to the old glory of David's and Solomon's time? Yeah, that's what they thought and therefore when Jesus, he begins to say, "Brothers, I'm going to Jerusalem to die. I'm going to be killed." This did not fit in their thinking. It's very uncomfortable for them.

So as Jesus is here leading his disciples into this new chapter, he's reminding them of something he's been saying all along but it seems like they haven't heard. He says, "I have not come here to bring peace." He said that earlier. "I have come to bring war. I'm not here to build an earthly kingdom. You have often talked about it that way but I'm not here to do that. I'm not even here to just heal people and make their lives better. I'm here to deal with the spiritual problems and causes that make your life miserable. That's what my purpose is. I'm not here to introduce prosperity. I'm not here to make your life comfortable as it can be. That is not my mission. I'm here to defeat Satan's work and

restore people in their relationship to God." It seems like the disciples haven't heard that. They seem to be completely oblivious to that teaching.

So we need to remind ourselves of that. Also today as Christians, children of God, you need to remind yourself of verse 24 often. Christianity is to take up the cross, and to follow Christ, and to deny yourself, and to suffer. Not a very nice prospect but that is the truth. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The only way to the crown of glory is to the cross of rejection. The word is plain. "If you want to save your life here on earth and the things of this earth, you're going to lose it. But if you will lose your life and all what you count precious and important and nice for my sake, for the cause of my gospel, you'll find it." Christ reminds his disciples and us that if you're one of his followers, do not put earthly comfort in your vision. That's how you get disappointed. Tribulation, many tribulations, trial upon trial upon trial, that's the way that we will enter into the kingdom. As the Master, so the servant.

So why, why would God allow all these trials and afflictions and all these hard things to come in the life of a Christian? It is to dislodge that anchor in the here and now. We've got it so deeply stuck in what we are enjoying here that God just has to constantly tug on it to get it looser and looser so that we may cast the anchor of our faith in Christ and his promises, not for this world, for the world to come. And that's why we need to be reminded that this is no paradise, that we are going to suffer time after time.

Now we notice that Jesus' announcement that he shows to his disciples is not very welcome. It is strange to the disciples. It's not new. Let's recall the first time that John and James and Peter came into acquaintance with Jesus. John said, "Behold, the King of Israel." Did he say that, children? Can I ask you for a moment? Give me your attention for a moment. When John is preaching there near the Jordan River, does he say to the Israelites, "Look, there's your King"? No, he didn't. You're right. What did he say, then? "Behold, there's the Lamb." What did they do with lambs? Lambs were going to be killed. All those little lambs that were across the Jordan River on the way to Bethlehem, Ephrathah field on the way to Jerusalem, all those little lambs were going to be killed. John the Baptist already said, "This is the Lamb of God that's going to be killed." It seemed like the disciples didn't grasp it. They didn't understand it.

John, of course, he preached often from the book of Isaiah. It seemed like that John the Baptist has studied that book very thoroughly. Now in Isaiah 53, it is clear that the Messiah is going to suffer, and yet it seems like it was not clear to the disciples' mind, and now when Jesus gives them verse 21, this first glimpse, and he is so tender about it, do you notice that? He doesn't tell them any detail, he just says, "Brethren, look, I'm going to Jerusalem now. I have to go there and I will suffer many things of the elders and the chief priests and the scribes." Many things. He says this as softly as he can. He doesn't want to frighten their minds anymore. He doesn't want to tell them all the details of what's laying ahead and that's sweet of the Lord Jesus.

He doesn't tell his people today either. He doesn't want you to know what's ahead and I don't even know what, I don't even want to know what's ahead in my life. I might not be able to handle that if I could think with all the things that might happen yet in my life journey. Jesus says, "Don't worry about that. Just follow me. Keep looking at my back." That's a nice thought, keep looking at my back. What do I see on his back? I see stripes. I see wounds. He says, "Keep looking at that and keep following me and let me lead you wherever I'm going to lead you. But I will only know the future."

So here tenderly Jesus only tells his disciples, "Look, I'm going to suffer many things and I will be killed but I will be raised again the third day." And it seems like that last statement never seems to register in their minds. There is a word in that text that is really very difficult for the disciples. He says, "I must go unto Jerusalem." The disciples don't understand that. Sure, for these last few months, no doubt, they have felt the increasing hostility of the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They felt it. They'd been hearing the talk. They'd been hearing the threats. They see the crowds are getting less. More and more people are walking away from Jesus' ministry. At first there were many thousands and now it's getting less and less. People don't really like his preaching. They like to see miracles and they like to see spectacular things but when he preaches about the things he preaches about, that's not really what they came for and so they hook off.

Now he says, "I must go to Jerusalem." Why must he go there? Why must he go there? Now he must go there for two reasons, I think. First, because God had decreed it already that he was going to die even before the world was created. Children, did you hear that this morning? Before the world was created, God already thought about you, how you were going to look like, how tall, how big. But he also thought about Jesus, of course, and he knew already way before the world was made what he would do and what would happen to his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And so for Jesus to go to Jerusalem is to fulfill the decree of God and to fulfill the prophecies, and you may remember these words, children, he was wounded for our sins and he was bruised for our iniquities. That's in Isaiah. That had to be fulfilled. Therefore Jesus, "I must go to Jerusalem."

But there's another reason that Jesus needs to go to Jerusalem and that's important for Jesus' disciples. These last two years, they were sweet times, I think. There were some difficult times, there were some challenging times, but it was an extremely sweet time for the disciples to walk along with Jesus along the way and to hear him speak and to hear him share and open up the things about God. Friends, that's heartwarming, so sweet. They wanted that to continue forever. They're thinking about sitting at Jesus' left and right hand and being with him all the rest of their life. He stirred up a lot of tender feelings in their heart and they had some very beautiful sweet experiences as he spoke about words and comfortable promises that just fell in their heart with so much joy. Yeah, I can just imagine those disciples in those two years have had so much joy with Jesus. They were eating and drinking his word.

In the next chapter, they get to see something of his glory when his whole face and his whole garment begins to shine as light. Beautiful. There's one thing that all that nice, sweet, wonderful communion and experience with Jesus doesn't do. What doesn't it do? It

doesn't take away a single sin. That's the thing that they needed to learn. "You can't be saved with just these wonderful times with me. It is indeed wonderful to read that word and to feel that word and to have these sweetnesses in your heart and to see all that, but that does not reconcile you to God, my Father. That doesn't take away the huge mountain of your sin. That doesn't breach that big gap between God and your soul. That cannot be taken away by just having me talking to you and showing you my wonders. That will do nothing about all the sins that you have done against my Father. I must die for you." You see, that's a hard lesson. In order for God's children to go from strength to strength, remember they have to go in the valley and you have to lose all that comfort that is not based on the blood of Jesus Christ. That's a hard lesson. The only way that I can be at peace with my Maker is that I would be covered, washed and cleansed in the blood of Christ, that my sins that I have done would be taken away from me and placed on somebody else who paid for every sin, and Jesus' words and Jesus' miracles and Jesus' sweet times and Jesus' wonderful things that he did with the disciples could not do that.

"I must go to Jerusalem." You see, that is the must. "The only way that I can save you, my disciples, is if I die for you, if I am going to be killed as if I am a great transgressor, but I will be raised again." Now there may be such in our midst whom God is dealing with in the same way. Maybe he's teaching you also that the only thing that atones you, makes you one with God is not what you experience. We can make it a strong idol, congregation. The experiences are sweet, they are wonderful, I am not going to discount that, but they do not pay my guilt. The only way that that guilt that I have done and all of us have done is taken away by the blood of Jesus and that's so essential to learn. That is what here God is beginning to teach his disciples and it is going through a difficult journey for them.

Now of course, the whole core of the message of the gospel is from the very first page of the Bible already laid out. Let's think back in Genesis 3. What did God do with Adam and Eve when he asked them, confronted them about their sin? He stripped off their clothing and he clothed them with a new set of clothing, and in order to make that new set of clothing, God himself killed an animal, shed the blood to make a cover for these two sinners. Yeah, the next chapter, chapter 4, we have Abel bringing a sacrifice to God. Children, what did Abel do? He killed a lamb or he killed an animal and he shed the blood in order to sacrifice, in order to pay or to find an offering for his sin. When in Exodus 12 God is preparing the Israelites for that dreadful night in Egypt, they had to take a lamb, had to kill it, take the blood, put it on the doorpost. Only then would they be safe. When God would see the blood, then they would be spared.

Do you see how essential this is in the spiritual life? I cannot be saved without the application of the blood of Jesus Christ on my soul, and that is what the disciples are learning here. So let us again one more look at that "must," the necessity. "I must go to Jerusalem and I must suffer many things of the elders and scribes and chief priests and be killed, and be raised again the third day." This "must" is not, "I am forced to do that." Like when your mom and dad says you must go to your bedroom, and you go to your bedroom but not because you want to go to your bedroom, you must go because your mom and dad told you. That's not why Jesus said, "I must go to Jerusalem because my

Father just tells me to do it." No. He means this, brothers, "In order to really save you, I must die. That's why I go to Jerusalem and I'm going to lay my life down for you and that's the only way that I can take you in my arms and bring you into my Father's presence. I must go."

And you know, let us not fail to notice the beautiful glory that shines out of that verse. There is no dragging of this Jesus to Jerusalem. He willingly, humbly, joyfully, struggling, oh yeah, we'll see that later, but he goes that way in order to lay down his life. He doesn't flee the scenes of suffering but he takes the cross and follows his Father. "Here I am. Take me."

Let's sing together first before we conclude with those other teachings on this chapter. 109, 1-4. I chose that Psalter because that's a prophetic Psalm about Jesus and his willingness to go. "The offering on the altar burned, give no delight to thee." You know, lambs and oxens, that's no what will do it. But the hearing ear and the willing heart, the sacrifice of his person, thou givest unto me. And that speaks in a prophetic way about Jesus Christ and his ultimate sacrifice. 109, all four verses.

"The offering on the altar burned
Gives no delight to Thee;
The hearing ear, the willing heart,
Thou givest unto me.

Then, O my God, I come, I come,
Thy purpose to fulfill;
Thy law is written in my heart,
'Tis joy to do Thy will.

Before Thy people I will now
Thy righteousness proclaim;
Thou knowest, Lord, I will not cease
To praise Thy holy Name.

I never have within my heart
Thy faithfulness concealed,
But Thy salvation and Thy truth
To men I have revealed."

Jesus' mediatorial sacrifice, a must. Just as we sang, "I will. I will. I come. It is written about me in thy law. It is my joy to do thy will. It's not I must or I have to but I must in order to save you, I have to die for you. That's why I go to Jerusalem."

So a picture, Jesus walking with his disciples along the road. Peter is kind of behind him. He's been listening to a conversation and all of a sudden Jesus gets taken by the shoulders. It says Peter took him, literally the Greek is he lay hold of him. I picture in my mind Peter laying his hands on Jesus' shoulders and saying it to his ear, "Lord, that be far

from thee! This is not going to happen to thee." It's really not proper what Peter did, was it? But Peter loves his Master. He just so loves his Master and to hear him talk about going to Jerusalem to die, he just can't help himself anymore. He rebuked Jesus. That's a strong word, but he did. He tells Jesus off. I'd say it in plain words, "That's not right, Lord Jesus. Be it far from thee," is, "mercy on thee, Lord. This is not going to happen. We won't allow this to happen and thou must not allow this to happen. We shall fight and we will fight for thee."

Now I doubt not at all that Peter loved Jesus, I doubt not that Peter was saved as well. The Holy Spirit has given us that clear indication in verse 16 and 17, hasn't he? And Peter says to Jesus, "I know thou art the Messiah, the son of the living God. I don't care what the whole world says. I," and he speaks, no doubt, for the other 10 of his brethren disciples, "I know that thou art the Messiah." And Jesus answered, "Peter, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for you did not learn that of yourself. My Father in heaven has revealed it unto you." I know Peter is saved but Peter is all wrong, isn't he, when he takes hold of Jesus in this rather unacceptable manner and tells him, "Not, this is not happening."

Why did Peter do that, children? I say Peter did it out of ignorance but Peter did it for another reason, Peter didn't like the idea that his Master was going to die. Peter's resistance is not the only time that a child of God resists God's further leading into the understanding of the gospel. As a matter of fact, it will be somewhat experienced by every child of God, what Peter here in his heart experiences. Do you know what happened here? Let me give you an example. Some of you when you were young, you were thumb-suckers, right, or finger-suckers, or some of you had a little blankie or a little teddy bear. I don't know what you had that went with you everywhere, in bed, out of bed, in the car, out of the car, anywhere, and boy, if you couldn't find the little blankie the world was ending. Now what happened to most of us who've gone through that? Your mom and dad began to tell you, "You've got to get rid of that blankie. You can't keep on sucking those thumbs and fingers. You need to get rid of that." Now I've had a couple of kids go through that too, children. I have never had any of them say, "Okay, that's fine. We'll do that." Oh no, that's a fight. "I don't wanna let go of this because it feels so nice and it feels so comfortable and I feel so safe and I feel so secure." Now you understand Peter. All what he has experienced in those last two years has been so sweet, so comfortable, so nice, and now Jesus says it's going to end like that? "I'm going to die."

The only way to grow spiritually, children of God, is indeed that we lose everything outside of Jesus Christ. And I know and others in our midst will know that such spiritual growing up is fearful. It is creating insecurity as we need to let go of all our comforts so that we see no one and nothing else but Jesus Christ. Maybe some of you are going through that journey. When the word of God comes to us and we keep on hearing, if you do not have Jesus Christ, you have nothing. You can't die, you can't meet God. That's not a preaching that you might feel very comfortable under, but that is what Jesus here says. "Disciples, all this sweetness is going to end. I'm going to leave you. I'm going to die and you need to learn not to depend on my physical presence and on my visible presence. I

am not going to be here with you anymore. You need to learn to live on faith of what I have done and what I have given."

You see, that is the spiritual growth. We need to all learn that, to prize the blood of Jesus as more needed than anything else spiritually and, friends, that is usually difficult. I'm thinking of Jonah. We'd like to be like Jonah, he sits under this beautiful gourd under the shadow of that gourd in that hot sun, and we have all our gourds like that maybe in different ways and then God makes his worm come and the gourd dies, and now he's lost all the shadow. Now so spiritually. We make out of our spiritual feelings and tears and prayers and devotions kind of like a shadowing gourd like Jonah, and God may allow that for a little while as he did with those disciples for those two years, but they're so young, as we do of our children because they're so young, they need these comforts, but there's a time to grow up and we take it away. So God does spiritually and here he's beginning. Now that is spiritually the same journey that every child of God needs to go when God takes away all the comforts outside of Christ, that there is none else but him alone. It's important, isn't it, friends, because these sweet experiences and tears and prayers and so on, they cannot satisfy the debts we owe to our divine Maker. We cannot deal with the wrath of God in any other way than with the blood of Jesus Christ.

Not pleasant for Peter, not pleasant for any of us, now what does Jesus reply to this struggling Peter? He turned. But Jesus turned, so that makes me conclude that Peter was behind him laying his hand on his shoulders. Jesus turns around and he says to Peter behind him and listen all, children, he didn't say, "You, Peter, get behind me." He says, "Satan, devil, get thee behind me. Thou art an offense unto me. You do not taste, you do not understand, you do not think the things that are of God but you think the things that are of man." Jesus objects instantly to Peter's words and he recognizes that someone else is using Peter and that's Satan.

You see, sometimes Satan can use a child of God even. Notice that. You may be very well sincere, child of God, because Peter was very sincere. I do not doubt Peter was not loving Christ. I do not doubt that Peter was not believing in Christ as being the Messiah. But even though he was there a child of God, Satan was using him and that still can happen. What grace we need to constantly be asking, "Lord, is what I'm saying biblical, true? Or is Satan using me to say things that are totally wrong and pursue things that are totally wrong?"

Well, in this case we know that Peter is being used by Satan and Jesus recognizes that Satan is doing one thing again that he's tried before. He tried it before, yes. Let's go back to Matthew 4 and I'll read it to you. Jesus was in the wilderness with Satan 40 days and then it is written that the devil took Jesus onto an exceeding high mountain. Maybe he took Jesus to the highest mountain in the world. And as he's there, Satan does something that only Satan can do, of course, he made Jesus see all the kingdoms of the world. I don't know, at that time China was a big country, and at that time the Incas and the Aztecs and the Mayas were big civilizations when Jesus was on earth. And maybe somehow Satan made Jesus see all those kingdoms of the world, they're all in his grip, they're all in the grip of the devil. The whole wide world was in the devil's grip and he lets Jesus see all

these kingdoms and he says, "Now look, Jesus, look, if you just bow your knee once here, I'll give it all up and you can have it all. You know what I mean? You don't have to go to the cross. I'll give it up. You'll have the whole earth. You don't have to go die on the cross for that anymore. Just one time, just bow before me." That was the temptation and Jesus says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Same thing, "Get thee hence, Satan. It is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." Satan tries there to lead Jesus away from the cross. Here he does it again, but now he comes as an angel of light, he uses Peter to do the same thing, try to stop him from going to the cross.

And therefore his words are fierce, "Get thee behind me, Satan." That means, "Get out of my sight! Get away from here! Your words are an offense unto me." And that's a word we have to explain for a moment. The word "offense" here has nothing to do with being offended. The word "offense" here is a Greek word that means a trap. It is used for a stick that hunters use to actually hunt birds and animals. It's like they hang bait on it and then they trap animals with that. That's the word Jesus uses. "You are an offense to me. You are a trap to me. You are trying to tempt me, to trick me. You are trying to lead me astray from the cross. Get thee behind me, Satan. I not only must go, I will go. I will go. I will not let you stop me from going to the cross and you don't even understand what you're speaking about. You savorest or you understand not the things that are of God but the things that are of men. Your whole thinking is completely off, Satan. You think that I can gain the victory without the cross. You proposed before to me that I give up the world, if you just bow for me, I'll get out of this place and you can have it. You don't understand, Satan, the only way for me to earn the right to rule the world is when I die on the cross of Golgotha. Get thee behind me."

You notice, children, something, and adults, that we have to learn from Jesus here. Jesus shows us only one answer to a temptation, that's the instant rejection of it, that is the instant telling, "Get thee behind me, Satan." There is no discussion with Satan, you know? The moment you begin to discuss with Satan, you're going to lose it. You will not win any discussion with Satan and so when sin and a temptation comes to you, there's only one answer, "Get thee behind me." Call unto the Lord Jesus, of course, because Jesus had the power in himself but we don't. But we need to flee not to debate and reason. We need to run as fast as we can with haste.

Now in the weeks to come, congregation, we are going to follow some of the details of Jesus' journey to the cross. He's ready. He came to suffer and to die and he knew it was closer. At this moment, he is ready. He knew what was ahead of him. The A, B, C of Christianity which is "if any man will come unto me, let him deny himself," is the A to Z for Jesus and he's ready. Here the dear Master, Jesus Christ, as we heard tonight, the Son of God in that confession, ready to give himself even though he knew that that sacrifice would be very painful, very hard, would make him cry, would make him fear, would make him suffer when he finally would be separated from his Father's heart, by such a love for all those disciples and for the cause of God's glory that Jesus is willing, ready, ready to go. We hope and pray that in the weeks to come as we follow him in the various ways, your and my heart may more and more be filled with joy, reverence for this great God in Jesus Christ.

Now we also will face temptation. Let's close with that briefly to make a reference to verse 24. Jesus felt temptation and we also will feel temptation to avoid the cross and therefore Jesus ends this conversation with saying, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The cross that Jesus speaks about there, congregation, is not the cross of sickness, not the cross of afflictions, not the cross of losing things that we all will go through whether you're a child of God or not. The cross that Jesus speaks about here is the cross that you will experience when you truly deny yourself and follow him and become one with his cause. You will then experience the cross. What cross? You will share the cross of rejection. You will share the cross of laughter and mockery. You will share the cross of persecution. You will share the cross of suffering for Christ's sake. We need to deny ourselves, he says, and die to ourselves and die to our name and die to our comfort. Following Christ in this verse is to share in Jesus' suffering for the gospel's sake. Not easy.

Are you ready? For what? To be spit upon. To be slandered. For the spoiling of your career. For being put out of the church as those Jews were. These disciples were put out of the church, you say, in those days. Following him is to take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow me. That's why I said this earlier this evening, we follow him and you must look real good at his back, all wounded with stripes, stripes that are to heal me of all what I have done before God. You see, that's the only way you can follow him when you keep in mind that he was stricken, wounded, bruised, to pay for all the sins that I have done. Church of God, and that is now why Jesus is opening this chapter to these disciples, because the only way their love will increase into such a degree that Peter is finally ready to lay his life down is when he understands that his Messiah died for him. And let us pray together that God may also give us that more and more in the days and weeks to come as we follow in this year's journey towards Good Friday. Amen.

Let's pray together.