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Text: Matthew 16:21-28
Title: The Musts of Christian Ministry

Intro: After leaving Magadan, Jesus and His disciples went into the region of Caesarea Philippi. It was in Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of man is?” The responses of the people were many. The people said Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. It is obvious that the people did not know Jesus. Jesus turned to the twelve disciples and asked them, “Who do you say that I am?” Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” makes it personal. You must know Jesus for yourself.

Peter’s response to Jesus’ question was, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter knew Jesus was the Messiah, but he did not fully grasp what all of that meant. Peter knew the Person of Jesus but not the passion of Christ. He knew Jesus as Savior but not that Jesus as Savior involved suffering.

The passion of Christ refers to the time of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane to His death on the cross. The passion is the time of Christ’s greatest suffering.

On several occasions prior Verse 21, Jesus threw hints at His disciples about His passion, but they were slow to catch them.

John 2:19 *Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*

John 3:14 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*

Matthew 16:4 *"An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So, he left them and departed."*

Verse 21 says, *"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."*

This passage marks a turning point in Jesus’ teaching ministry. Jesus is no longer hinting but began to thoroughly teach them about His passion. In other words, He began to teach them of the whole purpose of His earthly ministry. Notice in Verse 21 that Jesus plainly reveals His future suffering, death, and resurrection.

There are several things that warrant our attention concerning Jesus’ teaching of His passion.

I. The rebukes: Matthew 16:22-23

- A. Peter rebukes Jesus (Verse 22): Peter is upset that Jesus would talk about His sufferings and death. Peter could not comprehend the passion of Christ. In an

attempt to save Jesus from suffering and death, Peter responded, “Never, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

Peter didn’t know he was opposing the design of God. Christ’s passion was ordained in the counsel of God. Peter would later say in Acts 2:23, ***“This Man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.”***

Peter spoke out against the death of Christ because he did not understand the necessity of His death. Christ’s passion is the Father’s divine plan for salvation. Christ’s passion fulfills justice. Christ’s passion offers God’s righteousness. Christ’s passion is the way of forgiveness. Christ’s passion is the foundation of the Gospel. Christ’s passion is the sacrifice of reconciliation.

Hebrews 9:11-22

Peter deficient in mental and spiritual grasp spoke out of rationality, personal judgment, and Satanic influence against what Jesus said.

Peter’s mistake is common. Today, it is commonplace for people to respond to the things of God with rationality, personal judgment, and by satanic influence. Peter thought that because he didn’t like what Jesus said that it was not of God. He thought that because what Jesus said didn’t match his emotions and judgment that he could speak out against it. God’s way, word, and work don’t match human reasoning and judgment. Often, Satan seizes the opportunity to influence people to speak out against God because the things of God don’t match their emotions, will, and judgment.

- B. Jesus rebukes Peter and Satan (Verse 23): at the rebuke of Peter Jesus stopped, turned around, facing His disciples rebuked Peter and Satan. Jesus rebuked Peter for being led by his emotions. Jesus said, “Get thee behind Me Satan.” Satan used Peter to tempt Jesus. But Jesus knew Satan was behind what Peter said. Therefore, Jesus rebukes Satan for influencing Peter to speak as He has. This rebuke is like Jesus’ rebuke of Satan, in Matthew 4 when Satan tried to thwart the purpose of Jesus.

Satan is constant in his attempt to hinder the purpose of Christ in the lives of people. Jesus exposes Satan’s stratagem in Verse 23. Jesus said, ***“For you savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”*** The stratagem of Satan is to use the things of man to distract man from the things of God. Satan would have man to measure his future by fleshly standards.

If you succumb to Satan’s stratagem, you will be an offense to Christ. In other words, you will be a stumbling block or an impediment to the work of Christ. Satan knows that a person cannot please God minding the things of the flesh. Paul in Romans 8:5-8 says, ***“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the***

flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

II. The Requirements: In Verses 24-26 Jesus calls for His disciples to take up the cross and follow Him.

Notice the conditions Jesus give for true discipleship. Followers of Christ must...

- A. Deny Self: Verse 24, ***"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."*** To deny self is to submit your will to Jesus. In other words, denying self is "no" to self and "yes" to Jesus. John Westley said, "Self-denial is the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us."

Self-denial is counterculture. The culture is self-assertive. Self-denying Christians are isolated from culture by culture.

- B. Willful Suffering: Verse 24, ***"Take up your cross and follow me."*** Jesus places before His disciples suffering that must be willfully endured. Disciples of Christ are those who have given their lives to Him and are willing to obey Him even if it leads to hardship, persecution, and death.

Let me suggest to you that all suffering is not cross-related suffering. Not all job-related suffering is cross-related. Not all illnesses and diseases are cross-related. Not all relationship struggles and dissolvments are cross-related. Let me suggest to you that you can suffer in these areas, and it has absolutely nothing to do with following Christ. Cross-related suffering has to do with turning the other cheek, loving the unlovable, going the extra mile, forgiving wrongdoers, faithfully following Christ Jesus during times of hardship, persevering through painful periods in pursuit of Christ. Cross-related suffering involves the things you suffer because of your fellowship of Christ.

Verse 25 ***For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*** Jesus' words in Verse 25 is an echoing of what He said in Matthew 10:38-39. Life giving is such an important subject in salvation that Jesus repeated it several times to make sure His disciples understood it.

III. The Rewards: the rewards of God are much greater than the sufferings. Romans 8:18 says, ***"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."***

Verses 27-28

- A. General Reward to all of Jesus' disciples: Verse 27 says, ***"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."***

This will occur at His second coming.

- B. Specific Reward for Jesus' disciples: Verse 28 says, ***"Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."***

The Son of man coming in His kingdom does not refer to Jesus' second coming. It has been nearly 2000 years since Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension and none of the disciples who were there are alive today to see the return of Christ.

Two things are suggested from Verse 28:

- 1) The Son of man coming in His kingdom refers to what Peter, James, and John would soon be allowed to witness the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17).
- 2) The Son of man coming in His kingdom could also refer to the ascension of Jesus to heaven (Acts 1:3-9).