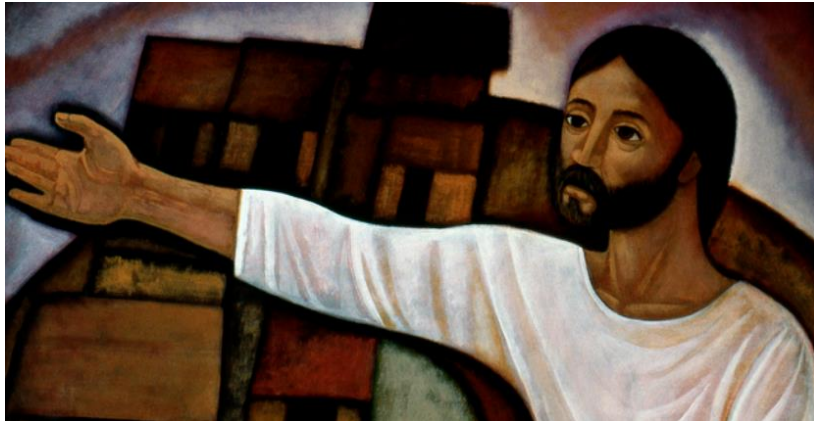


BUT LET'S NOT GO UP TO JERUSALEM



Jesus has taken the disciples way up north to Caesarea Philippi (way up on the edge of Israel near the Gentile country) ... to get away from the hassle for a while. They've been feeding the 5000, and the 4000, dealing with multitudes, and all kinds of problems. And so, it's like he takes them out of Detroit and leads them up to the Upper Peninsula for a little peace and quiet to think.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:13-19)

What wonderful words Jesus speaks to Peter. Now Peter wants to keep those words and stay up in the Upper Peninsula and just enjoy them.

"Let the Lord fill his church up here away from the noise and the rush and the confusion. Lord, now we have the vision we, know who you are. So how about if we stay up here and just worship God and you can build your church up here".

But the Lord isn't going to build this church up in the Upper Peninsula. If you understand what I mean, I have nothing against the UP at all. It's wonderful country.

He's not going to build his church up near Caesarea Philippi... away from the hassles, away from all the problems, and have some kind of nice sanitary, cozy, Christian Disneyland.

He's going to build his church right in the middle of the war zone, where the problems are.

He's going to do it by going to Jerusalem to suffer and die and rise in that city of trouble, that city which has been killing prophets for hundreds of years. That's where he's going to do it.

And so the very next verses in this passage, you really have to take as a unit... you just can't stop there...go like this...

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "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."

Matthew 16:21-23

If this vision, which Peter has, is going to take on any substance for Peter, Jesus is going to have to go to Jerusalem and suffer. And Peter is going to have to go too.

As the passage continues...

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

Matthew 16:24-26



If you confess that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the Living God. And you see it, and you know it. But refuse to go with him to Jerusalem. What do you have?

You have empty words.

You have hypocrisy.

You have a church, which is nothing but a Christian Disneyland.

If you believe that Jesus is the Messiah and if you confess that Jesus is the Messiah. The proof that he is your Messiah is that you follow him *to Jerusalem*.

You don't stay up there and live in a Christian dream world on Mackinac Island. You come to Detroit.

You don't hide behind the walls of a church. You don't insulate yourself in the Christian world reading nothing but Christian books, Christian TV, Christian Radio, Christian friends, Christian diet, Christian everything. Take whatever you can out of all the Christian stuff, but for goodness sake, follow Jesus to Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem is the real world,
with real people, real problems, real danger, and ultimately a real battle.**

And we're all like Peter when we get the vision. It's wonderful ... "you're the Christ, the son of the Living God." It's marvelous. And then the Lord says, "well, now that you know who I am let me show you my program".

"It's Jerusalem". "It's a Cross".

And immediately we're all bent out of shape. "No Lord, you can't do that. There must be a mistake". Then he has to shock us into reality by saying to us what he said to Peter, "*Get behind me, Satan!*" *You are not on the side of God, but of men. I am going to Jerusalem. And if you're with me, you're going too.*"

So the issue before us is very simple. Jesus says to every believer who calls on his name... "*You see that I am the Messiah. You confess that I am the Christ. But are you willing to follow me to Jerusalem?*"

Jerusalem means four things, Jerusalem gives four simple lessons for every follower of Jesus.

Jerusalem means risk.

Jerusalem means oblivion.

Jerusalem means a cross.

Jerusalem means God's way instead of our way.

Jerusalem means risk.



Up there by Caesarea Philippi, life is fairly safe and fairly predictable. But now we're going to Jerusalem where it's going to be full of surprises. Changes are going to happen that we never went through before. In many respects, for the followers of Jesus.... life up to now has been relatively within our control. But now control is going to move from our hands into the hands of the One, the God, whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out.

When Peter left his fishing to follow Jesus, that was a risk.

When Matthew gave up his lucrative tax collecting job to follow Jesus, that was a risk.

But now Jesus, is going to take these people further into the uncertain and into the unknown, bringing them to the place where the only thing they're going to have to hang on to for security, will be his word of promise.

And that's exactly what Jesus desires to do with us.

And what he's inviting us to follow him into. Taking us deeper into the unknown, he's taking us to Jerusalem, where the only thing that will be solid, the only thing that will be sure, will be his word to us.

Particularly this word....

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep”...

Notice that he says “I am sending you out” Don’t be hiding inside the walls. Come on, let’s go.

“I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour”.

God will give you his word that you can be sure of.

“For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Matthew 10:16-22

Now, none of us has been flogged in churches yet. And we haven't been dragged before governors. And not many of us have been rejected by family or hated by all. But now as we begin to bear testimony to Jesus in Jerusalem this Jerusalem....with our mouth and with our life we will begin to experience some suffering, storms will come that will shake us. So that the only rock that will not be washed away from beneath us will be the rock of his word

And we will learn to trust that word as the only solid foundation we have.

Jerusalem means oblivion.

It's like being swallowed up by a black hole and we disappear from sight. And nobody knows us anymore.

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Now the first way we lose our life is not through death, but through oblivion.

Which means that we become so unimportant, and so inconsequential in the eyes of other people, that it's like we cease to exist.

When Zacchaeus was a wealthy man, he had lots of friends. His telephone was ringing all the time. People were all the time after him. Then Zacchaeus gave away his wealth. And very quickly he became unimportant, even to the tax collectors. Nobody called him on the phone anymore. Nobody came to see him. The man shrank down to the size of a cockroach. But in the eyes of God, Zacchaeus now is drenched in glory. In the eyes of God, and the eyes of the angels in heaven, and in the eyes of those who have the eyes to see in the Body of Christ, this man is dwelling and walking under the Spirit of glory and of God.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:12-14)

When we leave the comfort of our friends and admirers and follow Jesus to Jerusalem. When we become followers of Jesus to the point where we are now men and women who serve him in such a way that even our names are lost in his... the Spirit of glory and of God comes to rest upon us.

In the eyes of people we look like a dismal failure, spiritual nonentity, a cockroach.

But in the eyes of God and in the eyes of his angels, and for those Saints who have eyes to see... we are burning and shining lights.

The Spirit of glory and of God has come to rest upon us.

What else do we need?

Jerusalem is a Cross.

We talk about a cross because Jesus did.

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

That was hard enough to take but listen to this one.

Then Jesus told his disciples "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.



The Gospel of Jesus is not only Jesus' cross. It's your cross.

Jesus died on that cross to wash away your sins.

Jesus died on that cross to give you new life.

But you will only comprehend that forgiveness, and enter into that new life....

.... when you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him.

We're talking about the death of our old self, the death of our ego, the death of this desire in every single one of us to be the center of the universe. The death of this constant search for a life without disruption, a Christianity with no pain at all, everything is just so nice.

God in his mercy brings us to a place where we are among people who can disrupt us without even trying....

Who hurt our feelings.

Who show us no respect.

Who have so many problems of their own they could care less about our problems.

And among such people, we are being taught how to lay down our lives, how to lay aside our garments, how to wrap ourselves in a towel and wash feet.

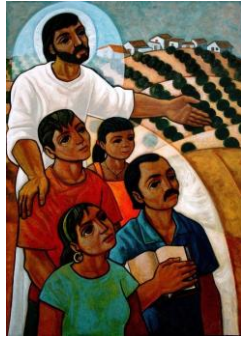
Do you sometimes envy your friends who are led by God to serve him in a sanitary church? Do you sometimes wish God would let you serve him in a setting that's more orderly, peaceful, and prosperous?

Thank God. Thank God for his mercy.

In his mercy he brings us to a place where we get some exercise at learning how to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.

What a privilege! May God give us eyes to see that and hearts to take hold of it.

Jerusalem means God's way instead of our way.



And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “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.”

Man’s Way- Is to Stay up there by Caesarea Philippi, just worshiping God without disruption and enjoying the vision in peace.

God’s Way- Is to go to Jerusalem... and die.... and rise.... so that we can bear some fruit.

Every single one of us has to deal with that temptation to go man's way, every single day of our lives.

We all want to go that way.

We just want to and we have to deal with that temptation, every single day.

We have to reject that tendency to go the easy way... and repent of our cowardice.

And learn to say with Jesus.

“Father not my will your will. Not my way, your way”.

“You want me to drink your cup? I'll drink it”.

“You want me to go to Jerusalem? I'll go”.

When we do this, then the Father visits us in the authentic, genuine power of the Holy Spirit

He does it in Jerusalem, among real people, with real problems, and real danger, and sooner or later a real death.

Here in Jerusalem we bear fruit, much fruit, fruit that will abide.

Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

**The same God who has revealed to us that Jesus is the Messiah,
is also revealing to us that we are to follow him to Jerusalem.**



If we believe that Jesus is the Messiah. If we have the vision that he is the Messiah. How can we do anything but follow him to that place where his cross and our cross will make the vision real?

If you don't understand this... The Spirit will show you.

Think about it, pray about it. It'll become clear.

Message: Richard E. Bieber 1988

Featured Art: Mino Cerezo Barredo ...Mino paints for lectionaries and has painted many murals in Latin America. He doesn't have a website but there are many websites that have short biographies and share his artwork

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/religiondigital/albums/72157631803766637/> and <https://worshipwords.co.uk/artwork-for-each-week-years-abc-maximino-cerezo-barredo/>

Prayer- Yes, Lord show us, help us to understand what it means to follow you to Jerusalem. May we willingly follow you into uncertainty....coming out of our places of safety and comfort....into our Jerusalems'. Lead us so we willingly put ourselves at risk for your name's sake, for your Kingdom's sake. Lead us to our Jerusalem where we willingly accept and embrace oblivion until who we are is lost in your name. Lead us to the place where we must take up the crosses you have for us, where we put on towels and willingly, lovingly wash feet in these Jerusalems we have tried to escape from. Lord, help us to follow you there and yes, yes, to cry out "not my way, your way, I'll go to Jerusalem, I'll go". Amen.

Maranatha Mirror

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN