

“What’s on Your Mind?”—Matthew 16:21-23

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What’s on Your Mind?”, is Matthew 16:21-23 → *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.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How well do you listen? Depending upon external distractions such as background noises, video screens and various other interruptions, and/or hearing impairments, listening can be a huge challenge primarily because of what’s on your mind? Worry, fear, anger, frustration and grief are some feelings which can trigger preoccupied thoughts, hindering your ability to receive what’s being said at a given moment. Listening to what someone is communicating becomes even more challenging in conversation as discussion stimulates more thoughts, opinions and experiences, which stimulates more discussion.

However, it is the purpose of lectures, conversation and sharing to stimulate your mind so that you can apply what you're hearing to your own personal life. Even listening to this sermon's introduction about listening may have already stimulated your mind to think about your listening skills and challenges in your daily life. That's what a sermon is supposed to do. Thus, it is very difficult to follow a sermon through and capture every detail because you have to come back into the sermon at some point and have missed some information. What's on your mind needs to be brought back to the mind of God through His Word proclaimed in the sermon.

Jesus and His disciples were no different than us in this regard. They had a lot of things on their minds as our text clearly reveals. Verse 21 of our text says what was on Jesus' mind: *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.* Jesus had the completion of God's plan for our salvation on His mind and began to reveal this plan to His disciples. It was that which not only preoccupied His thoughts but governed all His teaching and actions as well. It was a necessary plan to accomplish because it had to do with facing the righteous judgment of God for your sin, undergoing your punishment in your stead. Knowing this, one time He even mentioned how distressed He was until it would be

accomplished! (cf. Luke 12:50) But accomplish it, He would!

This plan was on God's mind as expressed in His words to the devil recorded in Genesis 3:15. God said: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* What was on Jesus' mind was this spiritual warfare with the one enemy of all mankind, the devil. Jesus knew that fulfilling this plan could not involve **any** shortcuts, even if it did involve the devil bruising His heel by His suffering the agony of hell for us and dying to overcome death. Shortcuts would involve disobedience to what was on God's mind. It was such shortcuts which the devil offered Jesus during the temptation in the desert in an effort to sabotage accomplishing the eternal salvation all mankind. (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)

However, apparently Peter had other things on his mind according to verse 22 of our text: *Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord! This shall never happen to You."* Aside from the fact that his mind was preoccupied with nationalistic ideas of Jesus' deliverance of the Jews from Roman oppression and the establishment of the "kingdom of God" in an earthly manner (cf. Acts 1:6), He really didn't know what was on his mind. While we are not told the time lapse between the record of Peter making the great confession of faith in previous verses and our text, one thing is for certain: In both

instances he didn't have a full comprehension of what he said. (Of course, we wonder this about Peter throughout the Gospel accounts which record his "hoof in mouth disease," making promises only to "eat his own words" in the end.)

When Peter confessed Jesus as *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, Jesus immediately informed Peter of the source of His speaking: *Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven.* (cf. Matthew 16:16-17) In verse 23 of our text Jesus again defines the source of his speaking: *"Get behind Me, satan!* I can picture Peter looking around in confusion wondering whom Jesus was addressing. Peter was expressing the satanic mind-set of salvation expressed by people so often. It is the desire to save ourselves. It is the natural sinful tendency to think we can make our salvation happen for us.

For Jesus, the Gospel—being saved from eternal damnation by **grace** through faith in His Person & Work alone—was preeminent. Thus, he told Peter, *You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.* Setting your mind of the things of man which becomes a *hindrance to the Person & Work* of Jesus is any concept of a relationship with God or belief in God which by-passes sin and the atonement of Jesus for your sin. It happens when you think your salvation is based upon what you do rather than what Jesus has done for you. It happens when you think being a "Christian"

should be a life filled with physical blessings, affluence, comfort and no pain rather than a life of suffering in the shadow of Christ's cross. It happens whenever the church is treated like a faith-based system of society with "hoops" one "jumps through" in order to feel secure in a relationship with God, rather than treating Christ's Church as "the communion of saints."

Listen to the description of satan's deceiving the mind to by-pass Jesus from 2 Timothy 4:3-4 → *The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.* My brothers and sisters the time has come. Just ask a person about the Gospel and see if he talks about what you do by loving others or what God does by loving sinners and dealing with your sin in the Person & Work of Jesus. Loving others is your works (i.e. Law) which flow from being a forgiven sinner through faith in Jesus (i.e. Gospel). Jesus refused to allow Himself to be sidetracked by the devil's efforts to thwart your salvation. Will you?

Because your eternal salvation is always the primary thought on God's mind the Holy Spirit works to bring you to His forgiveness and strength through the Gospel and Sacraments. While the devil is working to hinder the Gospel's work in your heart and life, the Holy Spirit is also working to keep you faithful to Christ in daily living. It is not easy. It

involves suffering and struggle in the midst of the presence of sin and the devil in a sinful world. It involves recognizing the real enemy—the devil—as well as your Victor, Jesus Christ. 1 John 4:4 reminds you that *you are from God and have overcome them, for He Who is in you (i.e. Jesus) is greater than he who is in the world (i.e. the devil).*

So . . . what's on your mind? Instead of getting self-engrossed in our own agendas maybe the better question should be, "Who's on your mind?" Jesus describes a life with *the things of God* on your mind as He described the life of discipleship in Luke 9:23 → *If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and **follow Me**.* Notice, we follow Jesus. He is on our minds! Why? Because when Christ was on the cross, you were on His mind! Because as Christ reigns victorious over sin, death and the devil today, you are still on His mind! Thus, we ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to *deny* ourselves along with our own agendas and follow Jesus daily. Amen.

"Who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct Him?"

But we have the mind of Christ.

(1 Corinthians 2:16)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.