

Community Group Discussion Questions

“The Pathway of the Church” Matthew 16:21-28

Sermon Series Title: “The Church of God”

Sermon Series Summary: The Church of God is the people of God throughout the ages, redeemed by Jesus Christ. We’re going to take a look at who we are and who we are called to be as the church of God. More specifically, we see that who we are is directly connected to whose we are in Christ.

Passage Setting: Matthew is the first of the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament, emphasizing the kingship of Jesus. Through this Gospel so far, we’ve heard his teaching and seen his miracles. Matthew 16 is about less than a year before Jesus’ death on the cross. He just commended Peter on his confession that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And in today’s passage, Jesus begins to teach what it means for Him to be Messiah.

Summary: Right after Jesus’ commendation for Peter’s confession in the previous passage, we see Peter rebuking Jesus for foretelling His suffering and resurrection. Jesus then calls Peter, Satan, for setting his mind on the things of man. Afterwards, Jesus then calls his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross. Do we have the right gospel, centered on a crucified and risen Savior, or do we have the mind of Satan? Have we taken up our cross to follow Jesus?

Central Truth: “We can take up our cross for Christ, because Christ has first taken up His cross for our sins.”

Sermon Points:

1. The Cross for Jesus
2. The Cross for Us

Opening Question

1. What does the cross mean for you?

(Answers may vary.)

After Jesus praises Peter for his confession, He talks about the cross before Him as the Messiah and the cross for us as His people.

Community Group Discussion Questions

Read Matthew 16:21-28

2. Why is Jesus' rebuke of Peter so significant for us?

(Jesus begins to teach His disciples of what it means for Him to be the Messiah. It means that He must suffer at the hands of Jewish leaders, be killed, and be raised from the dead. For Jesus to be the Christ, there must be a cross... and that is the cross for our sins, guilt, shame, and death.

But Peter rebukes Jesus because of what He said, and Jesus rebukes him. We do the same thing in our sin. We rebuke Jesus. We think He should be a certain way... or should provide for us in the way we planned. We tell Jesus what to do.

Jesus then calls Peter to get behind Him. Jesus is reminding Peter of his place, behind Jesus. Not only that, He calls Peter Satan. Why Satan? Well, it has been Satan's purpose to thwart Jesus from going to the cross. We see that His temptations were for Jesus to avoid suffering and the cross. So Peter saying what he did is right in line with Satan's will.

This is significant for us because whenever we compromise the gospel and/or proclaim a cross-less Christianity, we are in line with Satan. Even when we talk about Jesus but avoid the cross, we're not talking about the biblical Christ. The gospel we believe in must include the cross. The Christ we love and proclaim must be a crucified Savior... not just a helper or assistant or counselor or example. Our crucified Savior.)

3. What are some lessons for us as we meditate on our call to take up our cross?

(The cross is the pathway for every Christian. If we want to follow Him and be His disciples, we are to take up our cross. First, this means we deny ourselves. We deny our selfishness and self-glory. We deny our rights, comfort, pleasure, pride, glory, etc. We deny ourselves to obtain a greater treasure. We do this with any form of discipline to experience greater success, fame, power, etc. But what if the glory we have in view is far greater and more eternal? This denial makes complete sense.

Second, we are to take up our cross. This might mean that we endure hardship, shame, persecution, and humiliation for Jesus. We will suffer and maybe even die for Jesus' sake. We experience loss, grief, loneliness, brokenness, etc. in order to obey and worship God.

Community Group Discussion Questions

What do we need to deny ourselves unto? How can we take up the cross for His glory?)

Final Thoughts: *Jesus is the Savior of the world- not by strength but through weakness, not by taking but through giving, not by dominating but by being dominated, not by prosperity but through death. The cross is a huge part of our trust in our Savior. And if we believe in a crucified Savior and we lay ourselves upon a cross-centered gospel, then we must be crucified with Christ and follow Him to take up our cross.*