

OUR THEME FOR THIS WEEK

Sunday, August 28, 2011

“COSTLY GRACE”

MATTHEW 16: 21 – 28

We Americans often take pride in the fact that we live in the land of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Unfortunately, it seems that many confuse “the pursuit of happiness” with the idea that they are entitled to a life of ease. It can also be tempting for Christians to feel a sense of entitlement to an easy life, free from suffering, because we are God’s beloved. However, today Jesus reminds us that it was God’s will that Christ *suffer* and *die* so that he would bring glory to God and life to all believers in his resurrection. Christ also calls us to a life of suffering that brings glory to God.

Introit

Psalm 26

L: Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity,

C: And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

L: Prove me, O LORD, and try me;

C: Test my heart and my mind.

L: For your steadfast love is before my eyes,

C: And I walk in your faithfulness.

L: I do not sit with men of falsehood,

C: Nor do I consort with hypocrites.

L: I hate the assembly of evildoers,

C: And I will not sit with the wicked.

L: I wash my hands in innocence

C: And go around your altar, O LORD,

L: Proclaiming thanksgiving aloud,

C: And telling all your wondrous deeds.

L: O LORD, I love the habitation of your house

C: And the place where your glory dwells.

L: Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,

C: Nor my life with bloodthirsty men,

L: In whose hands are evil devices,

C: And whose right hands are full of bribes.

L: But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;

C: Redeem me, and be gracious to me.

L: My foot stands on level ground;

C: In the great assembly I will bless the LORD.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Food for thought – a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer regarding “costly grace”

“Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God. Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the *broken* spirit and a *contrite* heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him.”

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Old Testament Lesson

Jeremiah 15: 15 – 21

(The faithful prophets, such as Jeremiah, suffered persecution and rejection in anticipation of Jesus' Cross. Yet the Lord did not abandon them; He remembered them, and He was with them to deliver them.)

¹⁵O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach. ¹⁶Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. ¹⁷I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation. ¹⁸Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?

¹⁹Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them. ²⁰And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD.

²¹I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

Epistle Lesson

Romans 12: 9 – 21

(Paul describes the self-sacrificing life that is in Christ. By the certainty of His Cross and Resurrection, we "*rejoice in hope*", and we are "*patient in tribulation*" and "*faithful in prayer.*")

⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. ¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Food for thought – a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer regarding "cheap grace"

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

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Gospel Lesson

Matthew 16: 21 – 28

(Those who are called to follow Christ are called to sacrifice of themselves, even to suffer, for the sake of serving and giving glory to God.)

²¹From 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. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³But 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.”

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”



CONNECTING POINTS: OUR VISION IN ACTION

Put yourself in the Apostle Peter's sandals for a minute. He heard Jesus say to him, in response to his passionate desire to protect Him, “Get behind me, Satan!” He went on to tell Peter that he needed to have his mind on the things of God, not of men. Identify one thing in your life that is a stumbling block to your relationship with God. Confess it as sin, receive God's gracious forgiveness, and put a different behavior or activity in its place.

The more we know about the things of God, the easier it is to have our minds set on the things of God! Would you like to help people learn more about God? Talk to Denise Lucas about helping with Sunday School, Pastor Ben about helping with junior and senior high youth, or Pastor John about leading a Bible Class or facilitating a small group.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO CHRIST NOW AND FOREVER