

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 105: 1-5, 45c)

We give thanks to the LORD; we call on God's name,
We want to tell everyone we meet what God has done!

Sing songs to the LORD, belt out the hymns, translate God's wonders into music!

We honour God's name with Hallelujahs,
We who seek the strength of God live in the LORD'S presence.

**Keep your eyes open for the LORD, watch for God's works –
Be alert for signs of God's presence.**

We remember the world of wonders the LORD has made,
The miracles and the verdicts God has uttered.

Praise the LORD!

† Prayer

Loving God, we come to you as people striving to know better what it means to live our faith – to be powered by faith. Increase our knowledge. Teach us.

We thank you for providing us with so much spiritual guidance – through words of scripture, the life of Jesus, the traditions of the church, our families, programs of study and the leading of the Holy Spirit. We have taken in much of what you have offered.

Yet we confess, merciful God, that often we have been careless or afraid in our faith. Help us to put our faith into practice. Forgive us when we fail.

Encourage us to be strong, courageous, and determined in our faith, daring to give our all to you O God, and to love one another. Open our minds and hearts; enter in as we worship together. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Words of Hope

The God who blesses us with treasures of sense and spirit is the One who urges and empowers us to grow in faith. Thanks be to God!

➤ *Praise, I will praise*

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† Prayer for Illumination

Awakening, enlightening God, your Holy Word is all we need to guide us. Prepare our hearts and minds to receive the wisdom offered to us today in scripture and prepare our hands and feet to obey. Amen

Scripture **Matthew 16: 21-28**

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of 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, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."

But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message **Comfort Can Lead to Power** The Rev. Reid Chudley

CLAW BACK WORDS

How long do you think it took for Peter?

You can probably figure it out quite easily... because you've probably done it yourself!

So, it probably took Peter about the same time it took you... probably not very long!

How long did it take you... between the time you spoke words... words you wish hadn't escaped your mouth... how long until you wished you could physically arrest those words and then stuff them back into your mouth?

I know it only takes an instant to want those words back... I know because I have done it a thousand times.

I wonder how long it took Peter... having just said the words... to want to grab them out of thin air... and stuff them back into his mouth.

While the action seems to be almost instant, Jesus does have to turn and face Simon, before he says those dreadful words: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me..."

I bet that was time enough... for Peter to want those words back.

JESUS WANT HIS WORDS BACK?

I wonder if Jesus regrets his words.

I wonder if Matthew talked to Jesus, privately, about these words. Maybe asking Jesus privately: Rabbi, did you mean these words?

Rabbi, how could you call Peter, *Satan*?

Rabbi, do you regret your words?

Matthew remembered them... and wrote them down. Surely he couldn't write down every word that Jesus spoke... so I have to think that these words of Jesus are important for us to hear.

TWITTER WORLD... JESUS THE WORD

In a world of Twitter and social media isn't this an important discussion? A discussion about OUR words and how they affect us and others. Anyone who have been cut down by impulsive and thoughtless words... anyone who deeply regrets the use of rash words must surely understand this.

So the first lesson for us is a reminder for us to use words carefully. Thoughtfully. Slowly.

We can use theology here too.

Some of the first Christians understood Jesus as Incarnating... the Divine Word of God. That is the Word of Life... The Word which gives shape, substance and being to everything...

Jesus... the Word of Life tells us that words are primarily for creating, giving substance and form and purpose to the thoughts of God... which through the Word were spoken into life.

Words are meant to build up the truth... about God and everything.

Yes, Jesus also used words to rebuke. But remember who he most often rebuked: those who abused power; those who abused an un-complex faith.

Jesus used words of rebuke to those whose human ideals brought death to faith... instead of faith to life.

THE REBUKE

I wanted to start with Peter's rebuke of Jesus. But in order to give us a starting point we actually need to start with Jesus' rebuke. Not the accusation of embodying Satan, but the last part, where Jesus says: ***Peter, you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.***

What then are the human 'things' to which Peter has set his mind.

Well if we think about it, there is really only one answer. Peter doesn't want Jesus to go to the cross... and what is the cross? Well if we use the words of hymn writer George Bennard... the cross is *the emblem of suffering and shame.*

So, if Peter doesn't want Jesus to go to the place of suffering and shame then doesn't he want Jesus to go to the place of comfort and power?

What human doesn't ... on some level want comfort and power?

Isn't this what all of our social unrest and protest is working toward... **a balance of comfort and power for all?** No human soul yearns for suffering and shame; the human soul will only endure suffering and shame when it is used to achieve a balance of comfort and power.

So here is my definition for the *human things* ... against which Jesus warns.

Human things are the collective desire of the human soul for comfort and power, ***without enduring the experience of suffering and shame. Comfort and power... without suffering and shame ... This separation is the human things ...*** Why is this important?

SUFFERING AND SHAME AS TEACHERS

Suffering and shame are better teachers than are comfort and power.

Suffering and shame teach us directly about pain, human weakness and endurance, humility and human need. Suffering and shame teach us indirectly about responsibility, compassion, mercy.

Wouldn't you hope that everyone who is blessed with comfort and power would first have to spend some time under the tutelage of the cross?

Wouldn't the world be quite different if all of our leaders spent more time learning from suffering and shame than comfort and power?

Maybe there is a reason that many of today's brightest emerging leaders ***are other than those*** who were born to privilege.

Yes, our human souls crave a world without suffering and shame, but in truth these remain good teachers for our sinful sides.

TO BE CLEAR... I am not suggesting for a moment that we should liberate suffering and shame upon the world. Nor am I saying that these are to be ignored as necessary evils. All I am saying is that they are here, and they seem to be staying... so may we learn their lessons and remember them in times of comfort and power.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

The craving of the human soul for comfort and power is a product of our desire of heaven. But here... is not there. Earth is not Heaven.

Therefore, when Peter rebukes Jesus, saying ***never will you go to the cross*** he has mistaken earth for heaven and falsely imagines a world where comfort and power can come... without suffering and shame.

BACK TO JESUS

This is why Jesus' rebuke is so severe.

Get behind me Satan! rebukes Jesus.

And I don't think for a moment that Jesus regrets his words. He doesn't try to take the words back. Why? Because however **we** understand Satan, Satan's message is always about comfort and power. Remember Jesus and the temptations in the wilderness? They were all about comfort and power.

However we understand Satan, Satan's message is always about comfort and power. Remember the forbidden fruit in Eden. Comfort and power.

So, when Jesus rebukes Peter with the words, 'Get behind me Satan' he is accusing Peter of embodying the teachings of Satan... comfort and power without suffering and shame. And therefore, earth as a substitute for heaven.

By the way this is why we are taught to pray ... your will be done... on earth **as it is** in heaven... and not... thy will be done on earth... **as if it were** heaven.

Jesus accuses Peter of not having his mind set on divine things. What are these?

Well this is cleared up by the gospel.

Divine things... heavenly things... are comfort and power... obviously... yet these are things that cannot be easily managed by the human heart... comfort is too easily confused for blessing... power is too easily confused for righteousness

Therefore, Jesus left the comfort and power of heaven to take up the suffering and shame of the cross... in order to remind us that this is not heaven... not now ... not yet...

So, if the gospel is truth... true comfort and power cannot... under heaven be separated from the teachings of suffering and shame...

And finally, this... there is no shortcut to heavenly things... our political failures have taught us this... that every shortcut to comfort and power... leads more often to injustice and corruption. There is no shortcut to heavenly things... otherwise Peter's rebuke was right.

If there were a shortcut to heavenly things... then the cross of Jesus is unnecessary, and Jesus could have simply gone straight to comfort and power

There is no shortcut to heavenly things... certainly not for the world and certainly not for the community of Christ: also known as the church.

Our way is always the cross first and then Easter. Without the cross Easter is empty... yet the comfort and power of Easter remains always OUR hope beyond the suffering and shame of the cross.

Friends... there are no shortcuts to finding heavenly things. The church must embrace this and remember that historically... we have been our worst version when forgetting the lessons of the cross and the tutoring... of suffering and shame

To imagine comfort and power without suffering and shame is to make too much of ourselves and the world and we usurp the Word of God and rob Heaven of its glory.

May God bless us with a rebuke when we forget suffering and shame. For there are no shortcuts to comfort and power. **Amen**

➤ **Take up your cross** (verses 1, 2, 4)

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† Prayer (adapted from PCC resources)

O God in whom we live and move and have our being we come to you in prayer as the summer season draws nearer to its close and we prepare for an autumn filled with many changes.

We give you thanks for the occasions we have enjoyed this summer savouring the beauty of your creation right outside our doors. Thank you for the chances we've had catch up with family and friends, and whatever opportunities for travel, recreation and restoration have been possible. We recognize how blessed we are to live where we do and we are grateful for each moment in which we find rest and relaxation.

Today we remember those for whom this summer has been difficult: those still isolated by the restrictions because of COVID-19 – those who go hungry or face violence in forgotten corners of our own community and around the world – those whose businesses are struggling, who have to figure out how to be inviting and safe at the same time – and those who are uncertain how to engage with friends and neighbours and still be wise and careful in this strange time of pandemic...

May each one find courage to face tomorrow in your company

O God, Jesus walked the road of suffering with so many in pain and grief. We remember those whose lives have faced crises in recent weeks and months – through tragic death and unexpected loss – critical illness or injury – pain or problems that seem to have no end...

Surround them with your comfort and compassion

O God, Jesus often faced demands and pressure from his critics so we pray for all those who have not found rest this summer: for leaders figuring out a way forward to care for their communities when there are no examples to follow – for those whose jobs and responsibilities have changed, presenting new challenges almost daily – and we remember those who continue to seek work in these uncertain economic times...

May they know your strength and assurance day by day

*O God, we need the embrace of your presence, each in our own way. Bring healing and peace to our lives and to this world you love. Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may offer healing and peace to those we encounter. We bring our concerns in the name of Jesus who encourages us to pray together... **Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come – thy will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

➤ ***Immortal, invisible, God only wise***

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Blessing

Love sincerely, genuinely, wholeheartedly, and deeply – hold fast to what is good! And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which daily renews us – the love of God, that enables us to love all others – and the community of the Holy Spirit, that binds us together in one body, embrace us all. **Amen**

➤ ***May the God of hope go with us every day***

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