

**"YOUR COMFORT DETERMINES YOUR SACRIFICE"**

Matthew 16:21-28

Jesus, in our passage today, issues a challenge to those who knew Him the best. He talked to them about taking up their cross, following Him, losing their life for His sake and in the losing finding their life. He was speaking on the topic of discipleship. **How would you define discipleship?** Here is how Eugene Peterson defined it: **Discipleship is anything that causes what is believed in the heart to have demonstrable consequences in our daily life.**

This morning we continue in our series entitled, *Discover Your Windows* as we continue to look to a Biblical worldview over-and-against an opposing worldview that we could say is the secular worldview, a Biblical worldview vs. a secular worldview. And to just reemphasize what a worldview is it is how we look at the world, how we are seeing reality. And so a worldview is how we identify what is right vs. what is wrong.

If you were with us last week the title of the sermon was, "*Your Purpose Determines Your Mission*" and we focused on this idea by way of a question: Do we come together as a church for the primary (emphasizing primary) purpose of fellowship, or is our primary purpose to strengthen and equip ourselves for the works of service that God has prepared in advance for us to do in the context of our community of faith? The point is that fellowship, although essential for the church, is not the end. Fellowship is only one of the many tools we use in the church to prepare ourselves to serve Christ.

Friends, we live in a consumer-minded society, although with the economic crisis we are in, people everywhere are reevaluating their spending and what is essential and what is not. But we still live in a culture that says the store, the business is to serve me and my needs. How many times have we heard something like, "we (the business, whatever it is) are here to serve the customer?"

And how many of us stayed glued to the TV during the commercial breaks last Sunday during the Super Bowl just to see the great advertisements that were trying to consciously or subconsciously, through even subliminal advertisement, get you and me to buy their product? Somehow the world continues to creep into the church and affect our worldview. I mean, we know that we are not here to serve ourselves; we know that the church doesn't exist for us, for you or for me, don't we? We know that the church exists for those who are outside the church and we know our primary purpose is to make disciples out of people who don't know Christ, right?

Danish theologian, Soren Kierkegaard who lived in the 1800's compared worship to a play. He complained that too often we imagine that the minister is the star actor or actress in a play, with the choir in supporting roles and the congregation is the audience. In fact, we, the congregation, are on center stage, with the minister and choir coaching us to do our best for God, who is the audience. Sometimes we have the notion that we only

come to worship to “get,” to have our needs met. Now having our needs met is not a bad thing for we hopefully come to worship to receive God’s Word and words of challenge and comfort, but in the bigger scheme of things the reality is we should come to worship to “give” back to God, and in the process, we will “get”. We need to look at our coming to church with the mindset that we are coming to be strengthened, to be equipped, and to get into the practice of making disciples and engaging people “out there” who do not know Christ to become Christ-like.

Think about this- Jesus met up with a motley group of men as he traveled and invited them to follow Him. Did they know of Him prior to their first encounter? No. And so He met them, invited them to follow and they did. They were non-believers who came to believe in Him. They followed, they watched, they listened, they observed and they began to believe and mature and grow. Jesus showed them by example; Jesus wanted them to emulate Him. And so part of Jesus’ ministry was in preparing His disciples to

eventually take over for Him when He left. Let's take a look at one of these disciples, Peter and see how he was brought along.

Two Sundays ago we looked at Matthew 16:1-20 where Peter, not having human knowledge but God-given knowledge as to who Jesus was proclaimed in Matthew 16:16, "You are the Messiah [or the Christ], the Son of the living God." Let's turn back to Matthew 16 and listen in on one of the many teachable moments Jesus had with His disciples and look at the *Window of Comfort*.

First, **Peter's window of comfort**- As I said just a moment ago, Peter had revealed Jesus' secret identity in Matthew 16:16- "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And yet Peter retained a faulty understanding of what that identity embraced. For Peter had no clue that God's plan for His Messiah included suffering and death.

And yet this declaration or confession of Peter served as an opportunity for Jesus to teach Peter and the other disciples what Jesus' suffering and death meant for the lifestyle of His followers.

So **Jesus begins to explain what it means to be the Messiah (v. 21)**. Turn to Matthew 16:21 and see the progression or phases Jesus must go through for the divine plan of God to be fulfilled. Jesus must 1) go to Jerusalem, 2) suffer, 3) be killed, and 4) be raised from the dead. You see, the disciples had preconceived ideas, windows, of what the Messiah should be- a mighty warrior who would raise up an army and defeat the Roman enemy. Maybe they understood Jesus was Messiah, but they needed to have their worldview reshaped. And so Jesus began to teach them clearly what His mission and purpose was to be- that He was not coming to set up an earthly kingdom that He would not be the conquering Messiah but rather the Suffering Servant who had to suffer many things and be killed.

For an earthly king death would have been the end, but for Jesus, the Messiah, death was only the beginning for on the third day He would be raised to life.

Then we read how **Peter rebuked Jesus for speaking about His death.** Peter and the others hadn't really listened when Jesus told them about being raised on the third day and they hadn't heard Jesus talk about "the gates of Hades," in other words, death not having victory over the church (Matthew 16:18). The Messiah dying didn't compute for the disciples because a dead Messiah in no way was going to rule over His people.

So what does Peter do? Verse 22 tells us that **Peter can't handle Jesus futuristic plans and so he blows up.** Peter, back in verse 16 makes a great confession and now he explodes on Jesus and rebukes Jesus. What is going on? Well, Peter's actions, Peter's response only proves he didn't know what he was saying. And when he rebuked Jesus - that word "rebuke" means that Peter rejected Jesus' interpretation of the Messiah as a

suffering figure. Peter's thinking at this point is influenced by human thoughts, when before in verse 16 he is influenced by God's thoughts. And yet Peter's conception of the Messiah was in line with Jewish thought at that time.

What happens next is that **Jesus reveals Peter's sin**. Verse 23 finds Jesus rebuking Peter for focusing on human thoughts and not God's thoughts and Jesus puts him in his place by calling him Satan. For Peter was now serving as one of Satan's spokesmen, trying to convince Jesus that suffering was not in the plans. And so this Peter, whom Jesus called a "rock" in Matthew 16:18, now becomes a stumbling stone rather than a building stone.

There is a point in all of this for us as followers today. We read the Bible and this chapter from Matthew where Jesus is identified as God's Son, but like Peter, we can try and limit Jesus; we can try and limit His impact on us when we are focusing on worldly goals and ambitions.

We get caught up in earthly things- human comforts, our needs and wants that we forget our God-given call to sacrifice and serve. Peter was only trying to protect Jesus from suffering and dying. I wonder, do we do the same thing in the church? We try and protect the church and limit the church and in doing so we harm the church? Peter thought he was doing the right thing and I wonder if we, when it comes to the church, lock into a secular worldview and limit the church and hold the church back? Peter was looking at things through his window of comfort. Friends, **Peter's comfort determined his sacrifice.**

Next, there is **Jesus window of comfort.** Jesus made it very clear in what He said next when He outlined for them the way of discipleship. He had spoken of His own death; He then told His disciples that they would have to die to self, also knowing that glory would follow suffering.

You notice that Jesus then told them in verse 24 that **His followers must identify completely with Him.** And a big part of this identification

was denying oneself or self-denial. Jesus wasn't talking so much about "things" as He was denying one's authority over his or her life, and this, my friends, is a tremendous challenge. It is counting the cost and being willing to pay the price. And the rewards might come in the here-and-now, as we serve Christ and His church, but the ultimate payday will come when Christ bring in His kingdom.

So there is Peter's window of comfort, and then Jesus' window of comfort. But there is a third that needs to be addressed- **Our church's window of comfort.** We can be just like Peter and look through the wrong window. Peter was misinformed about God's plan, he thought he had it down pat, but he didn't. And just like Peter, the window of comfort we look through will determine how much we will be willing to sacrifice. And this window of comfort will be different for each of us. And yet, I wonder, are any of us misinformed? As a church, do we do things for ourselves or for those outside the church who we want to reach for Christ?

What is behind our desire for a more traditional service or contemporary service? Is it for those outside the church that we want to reach for Christ or is it for me and what I want and what I believe I need? When we think of the church are we following God's plan for the church or the world's pattern? Are we to more "in" the world or are we "of" the world?

Friends, the church must be more missionary minded when it comes to this culture today and we need to know how to reach those who do not know Christ for Jesus spent a lot of his time with the lost of His day- not the religious people of the day but the sinners and those who were lost. We need to be relevant to a world where 92% of the people out there on any given Sunday are not in any church- we need to be mission-minded; we need to think like missionaries.

I want to close by sharing a survey where people were asked this question: **What kind of attitude do you have about your church?** Here are the results: **75.4% have a positive attitude about their church.**

**23.2% said they have mixed feelings about their church. And 1.4%**

**said they have a negative attitude about their church.** So what does

this all mean? Well, the first grouping is happy- possibly with the programs,

the worship, maybe the pastor, the fellowship. And some might be happy

because their needs are being met and maybe, just maybe because they are

not being challenged to move out of their comfort areas or even sacrifice

what they want and prefer for the benefit of others. Maybe they are not

being stretched so that they can experience the discomfort of spiritual

growth pains. And if how they see things is threatened through change,

which makes them feel uncomfortable, like changing the worship style, or

times or dates, or changing the language so that visitors can understand

what is going on, there might be grumblings and discontent. The attitudes

might be positive, but could some be looking through the wrong windows?

The second group focuses in on what the church should be- the church

organized around the purpose of making disciples.

This group knows that all their needs will not be met but they understand the mission of the church, and the mission is primary. And so they will be willing to make sacrifices and the focus is on Kingdom building rather than personal building and on my own personal comfort issues.

This brings me full circle to our windows of comfort. Desires can be a dangerous thing. And so we need to get beyond our own desires and move outside our comfort zone to reach people for Christ. And if we do, we will grow and become all that God desires us to be and then when we look out through the window of comfort we will **see the cross of Christ and not all the things we think we need.** Friends, what do you see when you look through your window of comfort? **Remember, comfort determines sacrifice.** Amen.

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Introduction: **Discipleship- anything that causes what is believed in the \_\_\_\_\_ to have demonstrable consequences in our \_\_\_\_\_ life**  
(Eugene Peterson)

Soren Kierkegaard compared worship to a play...

Matthew 16:1-20—a teachable moment

First, Peter's window of comfort - Matt. 16:16

Jesus begins to explain what it means to be the Messiah vs.21

Peter is rebuked by Jesus for speaking about His death

Peter can't handle Jesus' futuristic plans and blows up vs.22

Jesus reveals Peter's \_\_\_\_\_ vs.23

Peter's comfort determined his \_\_\_\_\_

Next, Jesus' window of comfort

His followers must \_\_\_\_\_ completely with Him vs.24

Finally, our \_\_\_\_\_ window of comfort

A survey- Question: What kind of attitude do you have about your church?

\_\_\_\_\_ % **positive**

\_\_\_\_\_ % **mixed**

\_\_\_\_\_ % **negative**

Conclusion: see the cross of Christ and not all the things we think we need.  
Remember, comfort determines sacrifice.