



Sunday 30th August 2026

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Gospel Reading: Matthew 16.21-end

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.'

Other readings: Exodus 3.1–15. Psalm 105.1–6, 23–26, 45b. Romans 12.9–end

Homily

In today's Gospel reading Peter has just confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Yet almost immediately, Peter finds himself rebuked by Jesus: "Get behind me, Satan!" What has happened?

Peter expects glory without suffering, a kingdom without a cross, a Messiah with strength to overcome, overpower, not one who takes him to Golgotha. And perhaps we can understand him. We too are often happy to follow Christ when discipleship works for us. However, Jesus makes clear that the road he travels is not the road of worldly power. He began to reveal to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly...and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And then comes the powerful moment when Jesus turns from speaking about his own cross to speaking about ours: "If anyone wants to become my follower, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

To take up our cross is to accept the cost of loving as Christ loves. Sometimes that cross may be a difficult responsibility that we cannot simply walk away from. It asks questions of our priorities. It challenges our desire for comfort. It calls us to forgive when we would rather remain angry. To serve when we would rather be served. To speak truth when keeping silent would be easier. To give when we would rather keep. To love when love is costly.

Yet I think it's important to make a distinction here: Jesus does not glorify suffering for its own sake. Take up your cross does not mean that we should accept abuse, injustice or cruelty as though these things were God's will. The cross means loving faithfully when love costs us something.

The temptation is always to put ourselves at the centre. Peter wanted a Messiah who would conquer according to the standards of the world. We can make the same mistake. We can imagine that faith is primarily about God making our lives easier, safer, and more successful.

"Those who want to save their life will lose it," he says, "and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." The more tightly we cling to our own lives, our own plans, our own possessions and ambitions, the more anxious we can become. But when we learn to give ourselves away in love, we discover a freedom that the world cannot give.

The cross will look different for each of us, but the promise remains the same for us all. If we walk the road with Christ, we will discover that what appears to be the loss of life is, in fact, the finding of life.

May we have the courage to follow him not just when the road is easy, but also when it leads towards Golgotha. And may we trust that beyond every cross is the promise of resurrection. Amen

Conversation Questions

1. Can you identify times when your agenda displaces the way of being Christ asks us to follow?
2. What do you need to let go of, or 'lose', in order to focus on Jesus?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Almighty God,
you search us and know us:
may we rely on you in strength
and rest on you in weakness,
now and in all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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