**Matthew 16:21-28**

From 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. [22] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." [23] But 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." [24] Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. [26] For 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? [27] For 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. [28] Truly, 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."

**“Either Christ Or Self”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Hurricane Harvey has made a disastrous mess of things down south. We should be thankful that our government functions well enough to handle such disasters when they arise in our country. At the same time, there is a more unseen fact most forget or do not want to acknowledge. So, I was thankful to hear what the former governor of Texas and now U.S. Energy Secretary, Rick Perry mentioned last Monday. He said, “…The faith-based community may play one of the most important roles in this, long term. And that’s what they’ve historically done.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The “long-term” is not something most Americans consider anymore. Did you know a person could go online and find out what the top searched topics are for any given day? The day after hurricane Harvey hit a million more searches were for Game of Thrones Season 8 than for the Huston flooding. About a week later, the top five searches show a return to the typical sports, politics, and things like TV shows. Our Lutheran Fathers were right when they said, “Without faith, human nature does not call upon God, nor expect anything from Him, nor bear the cross” (AC XX, 37). Christians carry little crosses being mindful how the big cross of Christ proclaims our rescue, relief, and renewal in Him.

1. **Rescue by Christ calls out with the purpose to save life.**
2. The things of men are only look to see success.

* Peter had just saw Jesus give Him praise for the saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
* This Great Confession held by all the disciples was a vision of the promised messiah living more in fantasy than being honest to OT scripture.
* Our sinful old-Adam still orientates to plans that look to Jesus as that health, wealth, and happiness kind of Savior.
* At what point has seeing success become more of a god to me than the God who speaks by His way of having to save sinners?

1. The things of God publicly reveals the cross.

* Sixteen chapters into the Gospel of Matthew and Jesus now for the first time speak plainly how He “must” suffer, die, and rise on the third day.
* He already mentioned in the past that the disciples were to bear crosses and follow him, but they never realized Jesus was to carry the biggest cross.
* This need for rescue by a suffering Savior stands at the heart of the church for St. John says, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).
* Success is now to see that Christ truly has redeemed every person by His Sacrifice and none is outside God’s scope of salvation.

1. **Relief from Christ then delivers what any needs to sustain life.**
2. The things of men fashion a self-made efficiency.

* If we ever doubt about being both Saint and Sinner, consider how Peter in one moment confessed Christ only in the next moment rebuked Him.
* “This will never happen to you” was like saying to Jesus, “You have the wrong sales pitch to sustain your ministry as the Messiah.”
* Peter’s problem is ours too, not the world or unbelievers, but we Christians take Jesus and adjust His word to be more suitable for my life.
* Worse than sacrifice and suffering is how the sinful-self fails to believe God’s claim upon us rose with Jesus on the third day!

1. The things of God expose the devil’s delusions.

* So much for good intentions, Jesus would not let Peter remain in such darkness saying, “Get behind me, Satan.”
* God’s purpose was always relief once for all by overcoming evil with good wrapped up in the selfless sacrifice of His Son.
* Jesus casts out this devilish hold today by His Word and Sacrament so our self-efficient ways now die to need the effective gift of forgiveness.
* Relief is to believe God sustains any under the cross by His Son who guards us with life and salvation that has prevailed.

1. **Renewal in Christ finally produces something new to celebrate life.**
2. The things of men means suffering for the sake of glory.

* Peter and the disciples were ready to sacrifice for a Savior who would bring back the “good old days” to the nation of Israel.
* The Romans despised weakness and what made crucifixion a perfect match for any criminal or rebel that dared threaten Caesar’s power.
* Strength today now comes with freedom to choose even sinful things, love that looks out for self, and security based on works for comfort.
* Celebrating life is glory with no time for God based on the cross, suffering only to get something out of it, and has no need to live by faith.

1. The things of God means suffering for the sake of Christ.

* Baptism brings newness that says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”
* Strength now is to die daily so that the saint is free to be a slave to Christ seeing His Word of truth over my life.
* This is love that no longer needs to look out for self, but can be a servant knowing our master took on the form of sacrifice.
* Celebrating life is really celebrating Christ and His cross who won everything for us and so nothing is lost as it seems when following Him. (“Repay” on the Last Day.)

161 of our congregations in the LCMS were in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, but now this cross has become an opportunity for the Gospel. Their long-term efforts will be to show mercy to any and a witness to troubled souls that hope in Christ remains for all. We already have our own crosses and yet St. Paul gives the challenge to consider in Houston, “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” Christians carry little crosses being mindful how the big cross of Christ proclaims our rescue, relief, and renewal in Him. Amen. Now may the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://dailycaller.com/2017/08/28/former-texas-gov-says-faith-based-community-will-play-important-role-in-harvey-recovery/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)