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Pentecost 17 A  
August 24, 2005

## **The Great Denial**

### Matthew 16:21-28 (Own Translation)

From then Jesus began to demonstrate to his disciples that it is necessary for him to go to Jerusalem to suffer many things from the presbyters and chief priests and scribes and be killed and the third day be raised. And taking him with him Peter began to rebuke him saying, "Grace to you, Lord! It will not be to you, this." But turning to Peter he said, "Get behind me, Satan. A scandal you are to me, because you are not thinking the things of God but the things of humanity." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If someone wished to come behind me, he must disown himself and lift up his cross, and acolyte me." For should one wish to save his soul he will lose it. And should one lose his life for me he will find it. For what will be owed to a person if he gains the whole universe but loses his life, and what will a person give in exchange for his life?

### **Introduction**

You know how you watch a TV show, really get into the story, only to get close to the end of the hour and realize, "They're not going to wrap this up, are they?" And then read those words we dread but were expecting: "To be continued..."

Last week's Gospel lesson ended just like that, with a "to be continued." We heard the Great Confession of Peter, that Jesus is no mere man, but the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Then we heard the Great Promise of Christ: that on this confession he would build his Church, and not even the Gates of Hell could stop it.

But then Jesus offered this cryptic saying: "He charged them to tell no one he was the Christ." The scene stops, fades to black, and we saw those dreaded words: "To be continued..."

What did he mean, "Tell no one he was the Christ?" He tells Peter that he will build the Church on the confession that he IS the Christ, then he says, "Oh, by the way, don't tell anybody..." What do you mean, what does... "Nope: TO BE CONTINUED."

Today we hear the "dramatic conclusion" to the encounter between Jesus and Peter.

### **D) God Saves the World through Ordinary Means**

Jesus explains what it means that he is the Savior of the World

- He must suffer many things
- At the hands of the religious leaders
- In the end he'll be killed
- Then, on the third day, be brought back to life

And Peter, Peter of “You are the Christ” fame, says, “NO, NO, NO – the CHRIST can’t DIE! I won’t LET THAT HAPPEN!”

It’s like all those promises we make to our spouses and kids, “Honey, I’m worried about your flight or your dangerous work or the long drive.” “Don’t worry, I’ll be fine.” How do you know that? What makes Peter think he can stop the INEVITABLE?

Not only the INEVITABLE, but the NECESSARY. Jesus didn’t just sigh and say “looks like I’m going to get killed.” He said “It is NECESSARY.” IT HAS TO HAPPEN. IT MUST BE THIS WAY

And THAT’S why last week’s Gospel Lesson was incomplete. TO BE CONTINUED.

Before the Disciples can run around saying “Jesus is the Christ!” they have to know how God will save the world through his Son.

Not through a SPLASHY HOLLYWOOD VICTORY,

But through betrayal, slander, a kangaroo trial, and a cruel, agonizing death

The Story of Jesus makes a HORRIBLE movie. No cars being turned over, no great vortexes of energy swirling around the bad guy and saving the city, no lightning bolts or blasts of electricity. No SUPERMAN or BATMAN or INCREDIBLE HULK. Just a man dying on a cross – saving the world

## **II) God Saves Us Through Ordinary Means**

That’s STILL the way GOD SAVES THE WORLD. God’s salvation doesn’t need SPECIAL EFFECTS. It happens through ordinary bread and wine, it happens through plain, ordinary water.

Christ, the Son of the Living God, will speak over the water at that font and make it saving water. It will wash over Shannon this morning and save her from sin, death and the devil.

No, it won’t look like it, any more than Jesus hanging on the cross looked like the Christ. Non-Christians look at that baptism, look at us gathered today in this building and around this font and think, “THIS is SAVING THE WORLD? THIS is knocking down the Gates of Hell?” Naw.

Yet that is precisely what is happening.

## **Conclusion**

So we have the non-dramatic dramatic conclusion of the Great Confession of Peter –

The Great Denial of Peter

And the great illumination of Peter

That God won't save the world through "Parted Waters," "Angels of Death" or "Fire and Brimstone from Heaven." Anymore.

He'll do it through the death of his Christ, who will use water to make children of God out of Children of Satan, who will feed his children his own Body and Blood, using only circles of bread and little sips of wine.

That's the DRAMATIC CONCLUSION, that the THINGS OF GOD don't look ANYTHING like the THINGS OF HOLLYWOOD.

But here they are. Receive the salvation of the Christ, in water, bread, wine, spoken words, given power by the broken and dying body of a man hanging from a cross. Who lives forever, and invites you to come to him to live forever, too.

Amen.