

Matthew 16D

- Last week our study ended in v.20 with Jesus commanding His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ
 - That surprising statement came on the heels of Peter's bold confession of faith in Jesus which serves as an example for the rest of the church
 - Which in turn led Jesus to declare that Peter would preside over the outward movement of the Gospel in the early church
 - It seemed like a breakthrough moment for the disciples and for Peter personally
 - So after that defining moment, naturally we expect Jesus to send these guys out to spread the news of Jesus as Messiah
 - But not so fast, because Jesus says they can't say anything about what they have learned – not yet anyway
 - Because had these men gone out right then, they would have been doing it wrong
 - Operating out of ignorance, they would have carried the wrong message to the wrong group at the wrong time
 - They would have declared to Israel that Jesus was their Messiah and that the kingdom had come to Israel
 - But that message had already gone out earlier, and it had been rejected by Israel's leaders
 - So the time for persuading Israel to receive Him had come and gone
 - As a result Jesus shifted His ministry to preparing His disciples to launch the Kingdom Program after His death and resurrection
 - And that a change in audience would also necessitate a change in the Kingdom message itself
 - Instead of "Repent, and receive your King," the Church was going to declare "repent, and receive salvation "
 - Furthermore, that message could only be received *after* Jesus' death and resurrection and the arrival of the Spirit at Pentecost

- Calling upon the world to receive Jesus now was fruitless until the Holy Spirit turned the Kingdom keys through Peter
- So had Jesus' disciples gone out now, they would have carried the wrong message to the wrong audience at the wrong time
 - So Jesus has to explain to these men why a delay was necessary, because He knew they didn't understand yet
 - In fact, they barely grasped the fact that Jesus was the Christ at this point, as our text today will reveal

Matt. 16:21 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 be raised up on the third day.

Matt. 16:22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

Matt. 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

- Matthew says that from this moment Jesus began explaining His coming suffering, death and resurrection
 - This is the first moment that Jesus reveals these details to these men
 - There have been a few earlier moments when Jesus alluded to His coming rejection and death
 - Most notably, when Jesus spoke of the sign of Jonah, and that the Messiah must spend three days in the heart of the earth
 - But this is the first time Jesus has spoken about these things plainly, and even then the disciples didn't follow what Jesus was saying
 - Jesus simply began their education process here by introducing the plan using a four part outline
 - First, Jesus says the Messiah's ministry will end in Jerusalem, which was probably the least surprising detail in the outline
 - Had Israel accepted Jesus as Messiah, then Jesus would have entered Jerusalem triumphantly so He could reign over His people

- The disciples anticipated this, because the Old Testament says the Messiah will rule from the throne of David
- And the Davidic throne exists in one place only, in Jerusalem
- But since Israel rejected their King, Jesus' reign over Israel is to be delayed for two millennia
 - Nevertheless the Messiah's first earthly ministry would still end in Jerusalem, only in death rather than in reigning
 - Just as the King of Israel must reign from Jerusalem, so must the Passover Lamb be sacrificed in the city
- Which leads to the second step in this outline: Jesus says He will suffer many things at the hands of the leaders of Israel
 - In Mark's account, Jesus specifically says He must be rejected by the leaders of the nation
 - The Pharisees denied Jesus' claims in Chapter 12 in the hope they could persuade the crowds to reject Jesus as well
 - And many did reject Jesus, but enough remained committed to Jesus that He still posed a threat to the religious leaders
 - So they conspire with the Romans to bring Jesus under charges, leading Jesus to great suffering when He arrives in the city
 - Which leads to the third step...Jesus says He must be killed
 - The Messiah's death was always a part of the Lord's plan, because without His substitutionary death there could be no forgiveness
 - So that had the Jewish nation even embraced Him as King, Jesus still would have died first
 - He would have gone to Jerusalem to set up His Kingdom
 - But even as He did, Jesus would still have told His followers that He would die first because death was unavoidable
 - Finally, Jesus ends His outline with probably the most surprising statement of all: He would be resurrected after three days
 - His death wouldn't be the end of the story; instead it would be the beginning of the Kingdom Program

- In fact, until the Messiah died and rose again, there was no Good News to declare
- Jesus' outline explains why there was no point in these men going out at this moment to preach about Jesus
 - Naturally, having overheard Jesus giving Peter the keys to the Kingdom, they assumed they knew where the plan was going
 - But in reality, there was a lot they didn't understand about that plan
 - They didn't understand the need for Jesus to die and rise again
 - They didn't understand the arrival of the Spirit or the 2,000+ years of waiting for Jesus' return
 - They weren't expecting the shift to a mostly Gentile Church or the coming persecution for believers
 - So they had some knowledge, yes, but they lacked a lot more
 - And we're all in the same situation to varying degrees
 - We all have some knowledge, things we've learned about Jesus and His plan
 - And some of us may know quite a bit, and perhaps others know a little less
 - But we all have a lot more we don't understand
 - Because knowing aspects of Jesus' plan and *understanding* His entire plan are two different things
 - Ask yourself, how well do you know and understand God's plan for the world? Have you got it all figured out?
 - No? Well, do you understand His plan for the Church? What about His plan for this body of believers?
 - Can you even say with certainty what His plan is for your life?
 - So if we're all in the dark to some degree about what Jesus is doing around us, how should we respond in service to Him?
 - Do we stand still in our ignorance? Well, no, because otherwise we could never serve Him as He has called us to do

- Do we march ahead in our ignorance assuming that it will all just work out?
- No, because as we see here, Jesus would rather His disciples do nothing than do the wrong things at the wrong time
- So how then do finite, ignorant people serve an infinite, omniscient God? Easy...we just do what He tells us to do as the disciples did here
 - Walking the Christian life means staying focused on where Jesus is going, or as the Bible says it, abiding in Jesus
 - And to do that, we have to listen to Him regularly, daily
 - And if you're wondering how someone hears from Jesus, then that tells me you need to work on your listening skills
 - Because believers hear from Jesus all the time, in direct ways... not in an audible voice but yet unmistakably
 - If you set aside daily time for prayer, for study in the word, and for fellowship with fellow believers, you will hear from Jesus
 - But if you fall out of those routines, then you become like these men, armed with a little info but clueless of the big picture
 - And if you've never established those patterns in the first place, then you have probably been spinning your wheels
 - That's why Jesus gave His disciples this outline, because while their ignorance was understandable, it wasn't desirable
 - They couldn't possibly understand *everything* Jesus was saying on this day, but there were some details they had to know then
 - But if they didn't stay close to Him and listen to Him and follow Him, they would have done the job wrong
 - And that is our model too...learning continuously, following Jesus, never assuming we can walk our Christian life without abiding in Him
 - If we pursue life-long study of God's word, we greatly increase our opportunities to serve Jesus now and in the Kingdom
 - We show ourselves to be diligent workmen approved by God for how we handle the word of truth

- And by what He reveals to us in His word, He qualifies us to serve Him in new and greater ways
- But if we try to work without Him, to get ahead of Him, we're likely to say the wrong things to the wrong people at the wrong time
 - And as a result, we miss opportunities
 - And even worse, we may act contrary to the Lord's purposes, which the next passage demonstrates

Matt. 16:22 Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

Matt. 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

- Where angels fear to tread, Peter rushes in
 - It's not hard to understand how the news of Jesus' approaching death would have made no sense to these men
 - The thought that the Messiah could be killed probably sounded crazy to them
 - And how does a Kingdom or even a Church come to pass if the leader dies before it's even established?
 - What all these guys were probably thinking, Peter alone decides to say out loud in v.22
 - And I think there is a connection between this moment and the earlier moment where Peter's name is changed
 - Imagine how Peter must have felt when Jesus changed his name to rock and said on this rock I build my church?
 - And then Peter received the keys to the Kingdom
 - He must have felt quite privileged and special and important
 - It looks as if Peter let that go to his head, because now he thinks he can advise Jesus on the work
 - Matthew says that Peter first took Jesus aside, away from the group

- And there's one reason you take someone aside like that...to save him from embarrassment as you correct him privately
- It's like when your spouse says "honey can I see you in the kitchen", after you say something dumb in front of the dinner guests
- Then after pulling Jesus aside, Matthew says Peter rebuked Jesus
 - The word in Greek for rebuke could be translated censure or sternly warn
 - Peter says God forbid, Lord, this shall never happen
 - Peter wasn't giving Jesus friendly advice here...he's correcting Jesus in a stern fashion, reversing roles with Jesus
- And Peter's statement is actually quite humorous, in a way, because it's self-contradictory and paradoxical
 - Peter moments earlier said Jesus is the Son of the living God, which was an acknowledgment of divine power and authority
 - And now a few seconds later, Peter is saying that this divine being got it wrong and God would forbid it from happening
 - As some have observed, Peter joined two thoughts that should never go together: "no" and "lord"
 - Peter's making a mistake, and his mistake begins with ignorance over what it means to be the Son of God
- But there's more than ignorance at play here...and Jesus' response tells us that
 - First, in v.23 Jesus opens with a rebuke of His own, telling Peter to get behind Me
 - To get behind Jesus means to fall in line behind my authority
 - Jesus is saying you have assumed a role and place of authority when you should have been following Me
 - That comment tells us that at the core of Peter's mistake was pride, and Peter's body language reflected his pride at work
 - Peter pulled Jesus aside as if to suggest his new position means he had right to counsel Jesus

- Secondly, he invokes the name of God to suggest he knew God's plan better than Jesus
- And thirdly, Peter tried alter Jesus' plan, suggesting he was a better judge of what God should do than the Son of God
- That's what pride looks like...it's foolish, it's presumptuous and it makes us look ridiculous to others
- Secondly, Jesus calls Peter "Satan" but Jesus wasn't trying to insult Peter or shock him...Jesus was speaking in a somewhat literal sense
 - As a man, Jesus didn't want to get on that cross, because he knew the pain it involved
 - So just like you or me, Jesus dreaded the thought of it, and any temptation to avoid the cross made obedience that much harder
 - Peter was tempting Jesus to consider a path other than the one the Father had appointed for Him, and that's the devil's work
 - So Peter was acting on behalf of Satan, which is to say that had Peter got his way he would have been furthering Satan's goals
 - Ironically, Satan himself was ignorant of God's plan at this point
 - We know this because Satan was the one trying to bring about Jesus' death and ultimately the one God uses to bring it about
 - Only after Jesus rose from the dead did Satan realize that Jesus' death was his own undoing
 - Nevertheless, Peter's desires were ultimately aligned with Satan, so as Jesus said in Matthew 12, He who is not with Me is against Me
- Finally, Jesus says Peter is not setting his mind on God's interests but man's
 - This is probably the most revealing thing Jesus says about Peter in this moment
 - Peter wasn't thinking about what God wanted, he was actually protecting his own interests; man's interests
 - Remember, Peter had just been named the chief apostle, the man who sets the example for the Church
 - Moreover, Peter had been given the keys to the Kingdom

- And though I'm sure Peter didn't fully understand what that meant in that moment, it certainly sounded impressive to him
- So when Peter hears Jesus say the whole enterprise would come crashing down in Jerusalem, he immediately realizes what that means
 - I'm sure Peter also hated the thought of the man he loved being killed, but make no mistake, Jesus said Peter had set his mind on man's interests
 - So whatever concern Peter felt for Jesus, he was acting out of a selfish interest
 - Peter's ignorance allowed his pride to take control and he responded to protect his own interests
- But interestingly, Peter framed his concerns as if they were God's concerns ("God forbid it")
 - Peter didn't say I forbid this...he claimed God would not want this for Jesus
 - Peter was a "Ready, fire, aim" kinda guy, when he should have stayed quiet and sought to understand better what Jesus said
 - He should have remembered the Proverb

**Prov. 10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable,
But he who restrains his lips is wise.**

- Just as Peter's confession earlier was a model for the rest of the Church, so does Peter's mistake serve as an example for us
 - First, we need to come to grips with the reality that there is a God and we are not Him
 - He's not into power sharing arrangements
 - We're supposed to be behind Him, not in front of Him counseling Him
 - There are many ways to know if you are in "front" of Jesus, but here are a couple I see commonly
 - If you aren't in the habit of asking Jesus what to do before you do it, you are in front of Him in the sense of knowledge

- Or maybe you ask Him to bless what you've done after you do it
- Or maybe you just never think to ask Him about anything at all
- You believe you have the plan that Jesus needs, not the other way around
- Or secondly, if you're the Christian who must always be the exception to the rules that everyone else follows
 - You're in front of Jesus in the sense of authority
 - Regular church life or rules don't apply to this person because they feel privileged like Peter
 - Somewhere along the way, they came to believe they speak for Jesus and He NEEDS them in ministry
 - This person may have that bumper sticker, "Jesus loves you, but I'm His favorite"
- In all its forms, there is only one cure for this disease: that believer needs a dose of humility, and humility never comes easily
 - Humility comes from the Lord's rebuke usually delivered by trial, failure, and correction, and obtaining it involves discomfort
 - You can bet Peter felt sheepish when Jesus rebuked him and I'm sure it hurt his feelings, but Peter left Jesus no other choice
 - And if we get in front of Jesus instead of behind Him, expect a rebuke from Jesus through friends, family or the church leaders
 - Expect His correction, and welcome it when it comes, because it will lead you to a better place
- Secondly, Peter's experience teaches us that when we act or speak contrary to God's word, even when we do so out of ignorance, we further the enemy's work
 - We become like Satan in the way Peter did, doing or saying what Satan prefers rather than what God desires
 - And the most dangerous thing about ignorance is that we don't know what we don't know
 - So that as biblical illiteracy grows in the Church, so does carnality and selfishness done in the name of God

- Believers don't even realize what God's interests are, so they further Satan's desires while calling it God's desires
- And that's how we end up with many Christians promoting wrong, selfish ideas by calling them God's ideas
 - This is where busy-bodyness and legalism gets started and all manner of false teaching takes hold
 - It's where you get people saying things like God helps those who help themselves (which is the opposite of the Bible)
 - Or to justify some sinful choice they want to make, they defend it by saying God wants me to be happy
 - They are furthering the work of Satan in their own lives and in the lives they influence in the church
- You can see clearly every time a world disaster happens, and the world says if there is a loving God, why does He let bad things happen?
 - And then Christians ignorant of God's word feel the need to defend God's honor by claiming God isn't responsible for the disaster
 - They tell the world that the devil is responsible for disasters, not God
- Did you know that when you make apologies for God, you are actually doing the work of the devil?
 - You have diminished God and contradicted His own word
 - You are lessening God's sovereignty by suggesting that God competes with Satan for control of the world
 - You're making the devil look stronger than he is, which is certainly Satan's goal
- Meanwhile, the Bible tells us plainly who is responsible for everything that happens on earth, whether good or bad

Is. 45:5 "I am the LORD, and there is no other;

Besides Me there is no God.

I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

Is. 45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun

That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other,
[Is. 45:7](#) The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the LORD who does all these.

- We may not understand everything that happens or why it happens
 - But that doesn't mean we get to substitute our understanding for God's or change the Bible to suit our preferences
 - We don't get to say "no" and "Lord" in the same sentence
- Remember when the righteous man Job suffered one calamity after another at the hands of Satan?
 - The book tells us those terrible things came upon Job because God encouraged Satan to test His servant
 - And we're also told that Job was the most righteous man on earth at the time, so Job was understandably confused by it all
- Yet what does Job say in response to God? He laments his situation, he mourns for his losses, he cries out to God in distress
 - He questions God to explain why and he challenges God to justify it
 - But one thing Job never did was curse God or challenge God's righteousness in His actions
 - Instead, Job says

[Job 13:15](#) "Though He slay me,
I will hope in Him.
Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

- Arguing with God is an acceptable response when you're confused or hurt by God's plan
 - You can argue your ways before God and you can cry out to God for Him to explain His ways to you

- But no matter what happens, even if God should choose to take someone's life, you continue to trust in His plan
- Because anything less is doing the devil's work for him
- Finally, we need to set our minds on God's interests rather than our own, and this is a process of denying our flesh and learning God's priorities
 - Peter couldn't see what God was doing because he was only interested in what he wanted
 - And like Peter, our selfish desires and personal goals are ever before us, because that's part of the human experience
 - We spend most of our time thinking only of ourselves, and that's the nature of pride and selfishness
 - Meanwhile, God's interests – His goals and priorities – are clearly expressed in the Bible
 - So our challenge is to transform our thinking through the study of God's word
 - Simply put, if you want to focus on God's priorities rather than your own, you have to know where God is going
 - Death is perhaps the best example of this shift, because everyone worries about dying
 - Everyone is trying desperately to avoid dying and when death comes near to us, we struggle to accept it
 - And that's natural in a way...but when we live in fear of death, we're setting our minds on man's interests, not God's
 - The Bible says that fear of death is a tool the enemy uses to enslave people to do his desires instead of God's
 - And that's why Jesus took away the power of death so that we would no longer fear it and it could no longer control us

[Heb. 2:14](#) Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

[Heb. 2:15](#) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Peter's disobedience was driven by a fear of death – and not just Jesus' death but the death of Peter's dream, his personal aspirations
 - Next week we move through the rest of this chapter and into the next, and as we do we will see how Jesus tells Peter to alter his thinking
 - But even now glance ahead to the next verse to see where Jesus is going
 - In v.24 Jesus tells Peter that if you want to be a disciple of Jesus, you have to deny yourself the things you want in life
 - You have to be prepared to accept different goals, you have to set your mind on God's interests, not your own
 - Why? Because we are either serving Christ or we are serving ourselves, and serving our interests means serving Satan's desires
 - You could sum up the third point with my favorite phrase: Living with eyes for eternity
 - Learn to see things from God's point of view, and you will find it much easier to set your mind on His interests
- So Jesus' response to Peter was get back in line, stop doing the devil's job for him, and starting setting your mind on what God wants
 - And that's sound advice for all us...
 - Let's get back behind Jesus, embracing our role as disciple with all humility, accepting His correction and learning from it
 - Let's stop doing the devil's agenda out of ignorance, and instead let's learn to be patient and listen and learn
 - And as we grow in the knowledge of Christ, then let's be motivated by God's eternal interests, not our worldly concerns