

King of Glory Lutheran Church
August 29-30, 2026
Year A: Mt 16: 21-28
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
“Don’t Get in God’s Way”

²¹ 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. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must 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 setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ 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?

²⁷ “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. ²⁸ 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.”

Let us pray. Oh Lord Jesus, be with us this morning as we hear your words. Reveal yourself to us and move us to love you with more of our hearts, minds and souls. We are your beloved children and you ask us to not be hinderances to your ways in our lives and world. Amen.

Anyone feeling a bit of whip-lash? Wasn’t it just last weekend that we heard Jesus commend Peter for knowing that Jesus was the Messiah? “God has revealed this to you, Peter and upon you, I will build my church.”

Now, Jesus has very strong, terse words for Peter. “Get, behind me Satan. You are a hinderance to me.”

Peter's response is certainly understandable. He is human! What one of us, would not want our loved one to die, let alone the one we believe to be the new King and leader of our country?

They knew the prophecy. The Messiah was to come and rescue them from oppression. They had learned about Jewish history in school and were familiar with former messiah-like figures. They knew the story of the Maccabean Resistance, initiated by Matthias, against Antiochus IV, as well as the movements of both Judas the Galilean and Zadok the Pharisee. They were looking for someone to lead them in the fight, not someone who was ready to die.ⁱ

But from Jesus' point of view, His *teaching* is more or less finished, and now He will be *showing* the beloved disciples what it means to be Messiah. From now on through the end of Matthew's Gospel, all focus is on the cross. The spotlight shines brightly there as Jesus is dying and the Gentile soldier who confesses, "Truly, this man was God's Son!" (Mt 27:54)

Of course, the disciples don't understand. They haven't heard the intimate conversations between Jesus and God the Creator who sent the Only Son; being the ultimate example of God's love. Jesus knew God's will and nothing would get in the way of fulfilling what God had sent Him to do.

Which is exactly what Jesus was saying to Peter. Now don't get hung up on the Satan language. Jesus is not describing Peter as the image of a devil in red tights and horns.

Instead, Jesus uses that word as 'adversary.' Adversary. It is as if Jesus is saying, "I've got a cross to take up. You have a cross to take up as well. Therefore, don't get in the way of God's will. Don't be my adversary."

Such a description is reserved in Matthew for those whose words or actions are the occasion of turning others from their proper calling as obedient disciples of the Messiah—for those who place a roadblock in the mission of the kingdom and salvation. They are those who risk thwarting God's will that not one of these little ones should ever be lost to the kingdom (see especially 18:1-14).ⁱⁱ

At one point Jesus says of Himself, "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." (11:6)

To be in on the mission of God's Messiah is to be blessed with a mind and vision that looks at things not from a human perspective but from the perspective of what God is about. Remember another faithful man at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel? Jesus' earthly dad, Joseph. "Don't be afraid, Joseph, to take Mary as your wife. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus." (Mt 1:20-21)

Joseph was ready to end the engagement until the divine dream which intervened in his plans. Ever been headed in one direction when God comes and does an about reversal with your best laid plans? Taking up a cross, not being a roadblock to God is trusting that God has our best in mind. Seeing God's perspective and not ours.

Disciples of Jesus who practice this, we know it means we lose our own lives, for God's sake, but then find them again in God. Simply put, we find the true LIFE God offers us. One full of peace through pain, one full of gratitude through illness, one full of blessings in hardship.

Jesus invites us to walk with Him, in His ways and not get in His way. This week, King of Glory was blessed by the gift of a beautiful print by John Bellini. For years, John painted for himself as result of his own reading of God's word. Now, he is reproducing the paintings. This one is named, 'Walk with Me.'ⁱⁱⁱ

The giver is anonymous and we thank them very much. We will find a very special place for many to enjoy this amazing print.

I cannot dictate to you how to lose your life. Some of us may hear these words and hear God's Law. We've got more intentional work to do on our spiritual lives to die with Jesus and live His ways.

Some of us may hear these words as LIFE. In our faith community we've had many beloved saints who died knowing God's perspective. Joe Hoberman, Pam Maddox, Cathy Simmering. **When their trials came, they understood it was for the continued forming of their faith.** Therefore, instead of focusing on the illness, or the loss, or the hardship, they focused on Jesus and His life.

What I can do, is invite you to some grace filled self-examination. How shall each of us take up Jesus' cross as people of His way, so that another of God's children might live?

As you look at the print, reflect a moment on Jesus' command to take up His cross and not get in God's way.

Reflecting personally, how are we delaying God's movement in our lives? Is Jesus calling you to a deeper prayer life? Stop being scared to read the Bible? Forgive yourself or someone else?

What are we as this faith community doing right now that is getting in the way of building God's kingdom of love and grace? Not speaking up for the voiceless in our community? Enjoying the safety of the people we love in our church, while knowing young adults are yearning for someone to tell them about a spiritual life? Not voting in elections? Not voicing concerns to legislators? *God's way of life is not something we get to hoard and hold onto. God's way of life is meant for all people. Jesus loved all peoples.*

One example for all of us. Pray without ceasing. Faith in action. Pray at another time than regular worship. Individuals and congregations.

Praywithoutceasing.world

Ann Svennungsen

Ann Svennungsen has served as an **ELCA congregational pastor**, president of The Fund for Theological Education and Texas Lutheran University, and, most recently, **as bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod**.

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Jodi Harpstead, has served as an **executive at Medtronic, and president of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota**.

Look again...there is invitational love. There is a hand that can hold any scared or tentative heart. There is Jesus who knows exactly what it takes to lose life and die to self, so others might live. Let Him teach you. May He teach us! Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-22/commentary-on-matthew-1621-28-7>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-22/commentary-on-matthew-1621-28-2>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://johnbellini.com/>