

August 28th
The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Sermon Title: "It's Just Not Fair!"

Text: Matthew 16:21-28

JESUS GIVES UP HIS LIFE SO WE CAN HAVE LIFE EVERLASTING.

Introduction

"It's just not fair!"

How often have we heard that? How often have we said it ourselves?

Usually, the phrase is said by the person or persons, on the losing end of the deal - what ever the deal might be. It could be an earlier bedtime than your older sisters, a smaller portion of the chocolate cake, the last piece of pizza on the plate or it may be a referee who somehow didn't quite see the fouls committed by the opposing team.

If you've spent any time around children you've certainly heard the cry of. "It's just not fair." Be it with siblings or with other kids on the playground, one of the lessons that children learn growing up is that life is rarely, if ever, fair.

That is unless you are on the winning side. Now, the later bed time is seen as your "right," the bigger piece of cake, or last piece of pizza, is now a "pleasant surprise" and that referee simply had a "discerning" eye and the other team is merely a bunch of sore losers.

It seems that often times, the concept of "Fair" is really based on which side you end up on – the winning side or the losing.

In our Gospel for today, it seems that Peter has ended up on the “losing” side. Jesus shuts him down and actually calls Peter “Satan,” and only because he wanted to protect his Master from harm. That certainly seems unfair.

Last week, if you recall, Peter was a winner. Last week, when Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter gave out a beautiful confession. “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!” In response to that statement of faith, Jesus tells Peter, “Blessed are you...” He tells Peter that on that very confession of Jesus as the Christ, He will build His Church, and that the gates of hell itself will not prevail against it. It was a winning moment for Peter.

But now this week, how could Jesus make such a harsh response to Peter’s well-intentioned reply? “Seriously Jesus, you’re going to call him Satan? All Peter said was that he didn’t want you to suffer and die. To call him Satan seems a bit unfair.”

What Peter didn’t understand though, and what Jesus needed to make perfectly clear, can be found right at the beginning of the Gospel reading, in verse 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 on the third day be raised.”*

“Must” is an important word here. What does it mean to be the Christ? It means that Jesus must suffer, be killed and be raised. These events had to happen to redeem the world from sin. If Peter had gotten his wish, and kept Jesus away from the chief priests and scribes, if Peter had kept Jesus off the cross, there would have

been no salvation. Peter, the other disciples and you and I, would be utterly lost and Satan would have won.

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Of course, we are much like Peter. I would go so far as to say that we would have answered Jesus in much the same way as Peter did. “Suffer and Die, Lord? That can’t be right. You’re the Son of God! You’re the Christ! You’re our Master! That would be unfair. Why don’t you just sit tight and wait for all this death nonsense to all blow over?”

That does sound like a safer alternative to all the whippings, the blood, the spitting, nails, thorns and spears, but it is not the way of Christ. To just sit tight and skip the cross is the subtle, tempting and worldly way of Satan.

But the way of the cross is, in fact our way too. We have been united with Christ in our baptisms. United into His death and into His resurrection. We no longer act as Satan would have us. Yes, it seems unfair in the eyes of the world but it is the way of Jesus. A quick read of today’s Epistle from Romans shows just how unfair by the world’s standards the way of Christ is. It is a way of sacrifice, a way of forgiveness and a way of humility. It is a way of blessing ones enemies and leaving vengeance up to the Lord. It is a way that we oftentimes need to be reminded of with harsh words.

Page Three – Gospel Then

That is just what Jesus does with Peter today. He sets him straight. And while Christ sets Peter straight with harsh words – He actually does Peter a huge favor. He focuses Peter, and all of us, on what it will take to make us all winners. He

makes it clear that Victory over this sinful, unfair and broken world will only come through His bloody death on the cross and His glorious resurrection.

And, quite honestly, that is the most “unfair” transaction in all of history.

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From this point on in Jesus’ ministry He focuses on what must take place on that hill outside of Jerusalem. What He must do to save not only Peter and the other disciples, but the entire world. It is a very unfair mission, but it is the Jesus way of doing things. It is a way of sacrifice and it is a way of loss. It is the way of the cross.

Page Four – Gospel Now

The way of the cross, the sacrificial way of Christ, is a very unfair way.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Son of Man, was the only one who could overcome this sinful world and open for us the doors of Heaven. Only He could fulfill all righteousness and pay off the deadly debt of sin. Only JESUS could GIVE UP HIS LIFE SO WE CAN HAVE LIFE EVERLASTING.

This sinful world continues to be incredibly unfair. Satan continues to prowl like the roaring lion and tear at our hearts and our emotions. He continues to whisper in our ears and he constantly works to keep us far from the cross of Christ.

But our Lord knows this and He knows the pain that this unfair world can bring. He knows it so very well because He experienced it all Himself. The pain of loss and the pain of separation, the pain of loneliness and the pain of sorrow - the pain

of beatings, whippings, spitting, thorns, nails and death - and He experience this all for us, for you and for me. He experienced this so that Satan would not win.

Through His death and His resurrection, Christ conquered the old Evil Foe! He rose again that bright and glorious Easter morning and Satan was crushed forever! Try as he might, Satan will remain the loser. Christ was victorious and as His children we are victorious too. We are on the winning side for all of eternity.

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Conclusion.

“It’s just not fair!” will continue to be heard by both children and adults alike as long as we live here on this sin-broken world. But it will still be said by those on the losing side of the transaction, the ones who end up with the smallest piece of cake and it will be said with a certain sense of jealousy...

but not here in church. Not here, surrounded by the His gifts of Word and Sacrament, surrounded by His very presence. Here we will look to our Lord and we will humbly pray, “It’s just not fair, Jesus. It’s just not fair that You should suffer and die in my place, for me a sinner. It’s just not fair that You should love me so much that You took all my sins to the cross. For Your all encompassing sacrifice we give You all glory Laud and Honor. Amen. ”

Now the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.