

Switch

Last week we talked about good Peter, the Rock, the foundation of the Church. This week Peter is Satan, the Adversary of God. Yes, these passages are, in fact, back to back. What triggers this dramatic turn-around? It's pretty simple actually, Jesus starts talking about how this whole trip isn't going to end the way Peter thinks it's going to end. Peter, when he affirms that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, is working under the assumption that the Messiah, the Son of the Living God is going to help all of them rise up and overthrow the crooked powers and principalities that have been keeping them down. Peter dreams of that power, so do the other disciples in one way or another.

The notion that following God means rising from the ashes of a messed up world and being ushered into a glorious kingdom because you had the wherewithal to recognize and worship God... well that's pretty powerful. That still goes on quite a bit today. Quite frankly, we have a really hard time when Jesus starts talking all this doom and gloom about suffering at the hands of his enemies and being killed. We don't usually even let the last part, the part about being raised, sink in very deeply, because we want the up-front win. It's not really a debatable reality, a lot of Christians are really in love with power.

We like to be the dominant cultural force, we like to define the moral codes and standards, and when we don't get to do that we can feel awfully persecuted, in other words we can be just like Peter when he's the Satan. It's a tough pill to swallow, I mean he was just standing up for his teacher. He had just been promised the keys to the kingdom, the authority to bind and loose, the promise that the gates of hell would not prevail. He doesn't want Jesus to die at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees. What he doesn't realize is that Jesus doesn't want that either. It's a temptation for him to try to go another way, and Peter is going right along with that temptation.

This is where being an actual follower of Jesus is rather a bit harder than just saying I love Jesus. If you want to follow him, a cross is involved, and believe me that idea was pretty dark for those men. They have to give up their life, those who want to save their life will lose it. Hold on a second, I know we've heard this sort of thing a lot, but I think it bears some thought and maybe a bit of definition about what life means here. The Greek word is consistently *psyche*, rather than *Zoe*. *Zoe* is actually the word we most accurately translate life, in the sense of being a living breathing thing. *Psyche*, as you might imagine is rather more complicated. *Zoe* gives us the root of the words zoo or zoology. *Psyche* gives us psychology, and psychosis. *Psyche* is not just our living flesh it is our sense of self, the ego, the consciousness of our own being.

Allow me to give a little bit of elaboration by way of paraphrasing. Jesus essentially says to Peter and the Disciples: *If you want to be my followers you have to let go of what you think you are and become what I'm showing you how to be. If you want to hold on to your own ego and sense of who you are, you're going to lose everything, but if you go the way I am going you will get everything. Your ego will promise you the world but won't deliver, there's nothing there for you. If you go my way you will find the kingdom of heaven, which is what you are made to inherit.*

C.S. Lewis once said about people who play the Devil's advocate that the Devil generally does not need any assistance. That is so true on a lot of levels, all that is really needed for the Satan to win out is for people to simply follow their own self-centered egoism. When we put our own sense of self above our surrender to God's love we are taking the bait and swallowing the hook. Peter cannot deal with the idea that Jesus isn't going to win in the sense that any of them expected. He doesn't even really understand

the stakes of the game just yet. I would say that we still have a hard time with it. The reality that Jesus is pointing to is that place where we let go of ourselves in order to receive Godself. I know, that sounds like crazy talk, it did to Peter too. It would be easier for him to imagine a magical army of unicorns leading the charge against the Roman legions, than it was for him to imagine that somehow Jesus getting crucified would lead to victory.

Jesus ends with this promise, again I paraphrase, "I know it doesn't make sense because you haven't seen it yet, but you will, sooner than you think." I think that the "some who are standing here" was all of them, except him. Jesus was going to taste death before the kingdom was revealed, because his resurrection was the revelation of what God is doing and how God is doing it. We easily forget that when the cross looms and we feel like we're supposed to carry it, we would much rather just win, because our ego, our self, likes that much better than dying.

We need to come, again and again, to this table to remind ourselves that the cross is not defeat; that death is not the end; that a broken body and shed blood can live again.