

What Is The Value Of A Soul?
Matthew 16:21-28

Intro. 1) The Bible is full of great, important, and even haunting questions. “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment..?” (Matt 22:36). “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1). “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). “What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” (Matt 16:26).

2) It is that last question that I want us to consider and which Jesus addresses in Matthew 16:21-28. It is a question which gets at our priorities, that reveals what we truly believe to be important.

3) For graduates of Southeastern, many may think this is the day you have prayed and planned for, and no doubt there is some truth to that. And yet if I know your heart as I think I do of most of you, you did not come to Southeastern to get a degree and graduate. No, you came to Southeastern to prepare for a life of ministry, to follow what James Montgomery Boice calls “the way of the cross” (Matt. vol.1, p. 311). And why? Because like Jesus, you have come to understand the worth, the eternal value, of even one single human soul.

Trans. To truly understand the worth, the value, of a soul:

I. You must value the things of God.

16:21-23

- Peter has just made his great confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus blesses him and says he and his confession is the rock upon which Jesus will build his church, a church that will storm the very gates of hell (Matt. 16:16-19). However, Peter is about to become another kind of rock, a

stumbling stone, because he, like us, sometimes fails to value the things of God.

Why is this the case?

1) Sometimes we may not understand. 16:21-22

- At this point in his ministry (“From that time”) Jesus begins to lay out with great detail the destiny of suffering, death and resurrection that awaits Him. The operative phrase in v. 21 is “He must.” It is His Father’s will and He will do it. There is a moral imperative, a non-negotiable to His obedience to His Father.
- Jesus understood that “the will of God will not take you where the grace of God will not sustain you.” He understood the best place to stand in all the world is in the center of God’s will.
- Peter, however, did not yet know this lesson. He did not understand that the way to glory is the way of suffering, and that Messiah Jesus would receive His kingdom by means of death on a Roman cross followed by an empty tomb.
- Peter does the unthinkable. Even for Peter this is remarkable! He informs Jesus that he knows more of God’s will for His life than He does! The disciple instructs the Master concerning the ways of God. The human student corrects the divine teacher.

Trans. Yes, sometimes we may not understand.

2) Sometimes we should just be quiet. 16:23

- Jesus was well aware of one permanent and abiding truth: “Never fear the will of God. God is willing to accept full responsibility for a life dedicated to Him.”
- In rapid-fire succession the Lord rebukes Peter’s ignorance and arrogance with 3 scathing statements that echo His confrontation with Satan when He was tempted

in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11). Turning to Peter in a face to face confrontation

He says:

- “Get behind Me, Satan.” Get out of my way is the gist.
- “You are an offence (*Gr.* skandalon, *NIV*, “stumbling block”) to Me.”

One moment you are a great rock to stand on and the next you are a stone over which people trip and fall. One moment you speak for God the next you speak for the devil.

- “For you are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men.” Peter was not thinking clearly and would have been wise to remain quiet. To not understand God is one thing. To question His will is something all-together different. Peter forgot that “if you bargain with God, you only cheat yourself.”

Trans. You must value the things of God.

II. You must value the call to die.

16:24-26

- Our Lord never missed a teachable moment. Peter had stuck both feet in his mouth, but it provided a golden opportunity for our Lord to explain 1) what it really means to follow Jesus and 2) what is the reward for following Jesus.
- My hero Adrian Rogers said so well, “You can’t say, Lord, show me Your will for my life and then I’ll make up my mind whether I want to do it.” You simply hand God a blank sheet of paper, sign your name at the bottom, and say, “Lord, you fill in the details.”

1) There is a cost in following Jesus.

16:24

- The words are directed to the disciples, but they are for everyone: “If anyone.”

This is a word for all of us here today.” Would you become a follower of Jesus, a devoted disciple of the King of all Kings, the one true God who invaded history and lived among us?

- 3 steps are laid out for us in v. 25, with what Don Carson calls a “relentless logic” following. What are the 3 steps, the cost, in following Jesus?

#1 Deny self. You set aside your wants, desires, plans, goals and ambitions and exchange them for His! His life becomes your life (Gal. 2:20).

#2 Take up your cross. To deny self is to die to self. Your life is no longer your own but His. You daily, for life, say no to you that you might say yes to Him. You value the cost to die for Him!

#3 Follow Me. “You will never learn that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you want.” You see, “you don’t have to know where, why or even how, when you know Who!” Follow Me.

- How sad and tragic it is that Christians have so often missed out on the joy, and yes the cost, of following Jesus.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor who was hanged at the age of 39 in 1945 for opposing Adolf Hitler. His most famous work was *The Cost of Discipleship*, but in his *Ethics*, he challenges us again to consider what it means to truly follow Jesus, and what it means when we don’t.

“I am guilty of cowardly silence at a time when I ought to have spoken. We, the church, must confess that we have not proclaimed often or clearly enough our message of the one God who has revealed Himself for all times in Jesus Christ and who will tolerate no other gods beside Himself. She must confess her timidity, her evasiveness, her dangerous concessions. She was silent when she should have cried out because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud

to heaven. She has failed to speak the right word in the right way at the right time... The church must confess that she has desired security, peace and quiet, possessions and honor, to which she has no right...She has not borne witness to the truth of God...by her own silence she has rendered herself guilty because of her unwillingness to suffer for what she knows to be right.”
Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Ethics*, 112.

Trans. Yes, there is a cost in following Jesus.

2) There is a cost in rejecting Jesus. 16:25-26

Why follow Jesus if it is so costly? Because the cost is even greater if you don't. The logic of these verses is not only relentless, it is stunning, if you really grasp all that it is saying.

Vs. 25 - You want to save your life (soul) then you will lost it.

You want to lose your life (soul) for Christ, then you will find it.

Vs. 26 - For...gain the whole world and lose your soul...what profit? None.

- What can you give in exchange for your soul? Nothing. There will be no bargaining when we stand before God at the judgment.

And thus the old saying is true isn't it: “We live one life; will soon be past.

Only what's done for Christ will last.” You want to live for Jesus? Then you must value the call to die.

III. You must value the promise of Christ's Kingdom. 16:27-28

- There is no cheap, easy, or lazy way to serve Jesus. But, there is no better, wiser or more rewarding way than to serve Jesus.
- You see, you should never fear the will of God because in the end He wins.
We do not fight for victory, we fight from victory.

1) The kingdom of Christ is coming. 16:27

Jesus is coming and judgment is inevitable. Those who follow Him now will enjoy His reward then. They will discover that the cross was earth's greatest tragedy but it was heaven's great triumph. It will be the day when those who have loved Him with their heart will see Him face to face! (1 John 3:1-3).

2) The coming of Christ is certain. 16:28

- The disciples indeed saw the kingdom of God coming. The glorious transfiguration of Matthew 17 was a preview of coming attractions. The glorious resurrection was a proclamation of victory. The glorious ascension was a promise of His coming again.
- Some people ask, "what is this world coming to?" I can answer that, "it is coming to Jesus."

Conclusion

What does a life look like that values the eternal worth of a single, human soul? It looks something like this story that came out of Turkey in April 2007.

A Powerful Witness in the Funeral of Turkish Martyrs

On Wednesday April 18, 2007, the fledgling Christian community in this nation of 70 million Muslims, suffered a devastating blow, when three of its finest, Necati Aydin, Tilman Geske, and Ugur Yuksel, were brutally murdered for their faith. One German and two Turkish brothers were found in the print shop, in south central Turkey, where they published and sold Bibles. They had been tortured, stabbed repeatedly, and bound with their throats slit. Sadly, it was at the hands of five trusted young men, who had claimed to be seekers of the LORD. Yet, what appeared to be a victory for the enemy has resulted in one of the most OPEN DECLARATIONS of the GOSPEL this nation has seen since the Apostle Paul! Therefore, we rejoice that not one drop of blood shed by these dear saints has fallen to the ground in vain.

On April 21st, approximately 500 believers gathered to honor the lives of these martyrs for Jesus. Despite the heavy police and media coverage in a country that is almost totally Muslim, each of us had determined that it was worth the risk and exposure, to stand together for our LORD. After all, it seemed a small sacrifice, compared to the loss experienced by the wives, children and fiancé of these 3 men.

What we witnessed has FOREVER changed our lives! As the body of one of the slain was carried into the courtyard, high upon the shoulders of our Turkish brothers, spontaneous applause burst forth! I leaned over to my national friend and queried, “Is this normal for funerals, in your culture?” “No,” he said, “it’s because he’s a martyr!” As the casket continued its journey toward the front, beautiful worship music erupted. Then everyone joined together in the singing of Turkish praise songs.

However, what followed nearly took our breath away! Approximately ten [Christian] Turkish leaders began to proclaim openly the GOSPEL in front of television cameras, newspaper reporters, police officials, the Deputy Governor of Izmir and several other important officials. FEARLESSLY, yet with GENTLE STRENGTH each shared his faith in CHRIST, and HIS FORGIVENESS of those who had committed the heinous murders! Additionally, they shared that CHRIST had won the VICTORY, and at this very hour the martyrs were standing before the very throne of GOD! Several mentioned that the lives of these men were perhaps the seeds that must be planted in order for a harvest to come forth.

However, what happened next.....can ONLY be explained by the SUPERNATURAL LOVE and STRENGTH that GOD ALONE can give. Spontaneously, in an unplanned moment—Necati’s wife asked if she could speak. “Amid her tears she spoke of her forgiveness of the very men who had tortured and killed her precious husband and the father of her children! In an emotion filled voice, she asserted: “I know my Necati was praying for them, even while he was being tortured.” She also spoke of the wonderful love they shared as a family and their joy in serving the LORD together. Lastly, she stated “I loved my husband very, very much—but, I love my Jesus even more. And that is how I can face tomorrow.” Again thunderous applause burst forth!

In the closing moments of this incredible service, one of the pastors shouted “Afferin Necati!!! Afferin Tilman!!! Afferin Ugur!!!---Which translated means---“Well done Necati!! Well done Tilman!! Well done Ugur!! We are certain the LORD echoed those same sentiments, as he received those precious men into HIS heavenly kingdom!!!

The value of a single soul is great indeed because heaven and hell are real and Jesus makes all the difference. May it be your passion for life to seek out and rescue as many as you can, even if it cost you your life. You will discover when you stand before King Jesus, it was worth it.