

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 22, 2020**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 207 (375:5) 341, 405, 179

Lessons: Jonah 3:1-9; James 3:13-18; Luke 10:38-42

Text: Matthew 16:21-23

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Fellow Redeemed in Christ, our crucified and risen Savior,

In the Lenten Season it is appropriate that we hear what Jesus said in foretelling his suffering, death and resurrection. For in the Lenten Season we want to intently meditate on the fulfillment of Jesus' words.

Several times during his ministry Jesus had referred to his coming passion in veiled language. For example, when the Jews objected to Jesus cleansing the temple, they wanted to know what miraculous sign he would show them to prove that he had the authority to cleanse the temple. Jesus told them, "***Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days,***" John 2:19. We are told, "***The temple he had spoken of was his body,***" v. 21. Again, he told Nicodemus, "***Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,***" John 3:14. Another time, when the unbelieving Jews asked Jesus for a sign that he was the Christ, Jesus told them, "***A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,***" Matthew 12:39-40. And again, in the Good Shepherd chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus said, "***The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again,***" John 10:17.

As Jesus' ministry was drawing to a close, he felt that now was the time to speak about his passion in language that was unmistakably clear. This is what we want to meditate on:

**JESUS FORETELLS HIS SUFFERING, DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

1. **He speaks of this as a divine necessity;**
2. **He rebukes Peter for his human interference.**

***"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*** In very clear language Jesus began to explain to his disciples what all would be included in his redemptive work as the Christ, the promised Messiah. He told them who would be responsible for his suffering and death. He mentioned the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law, also known as scribes. There were 71 members of this body, headed by the high priest. This court was also known as the Sanhedrin. This was the highest court of the Jews, but they had to submit their decisions to the Roman rulers. It was before this high court that Jesus was put on trial.

These men were responsible for teaching the truths of the Old Testament Scriptures to the people. They should have had the best knowledge of what the Scriptures prophesied of the coming Messiah. They also should have recognized Jesus of Nazareth according to his preaching and miracles as the One in whom all these messianic prophecies were fulfilled. But most of their members rejected Jesus in unbelief. (The Bible mentions Joseph of Arimathea as a member of the ruling council who had not consented to their decision and action, Luke 23:51.) As for the others, their eyes were blinded by their bitter hatred of Jesus. These men arranged for Jesus' betrayal with Judas Iscariot. They were the ones who had Jesus taken captive in the Garden of

Gethsemane and put on trial. They were the ones who insisted before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, that Jesus be crucified. They were the ones who mocked Jesus, spit in his face and slapped him. They were the ones who mocked Jesus while he was hanging on the cross. **“He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, “I am the Son of God!””** Matthew 27:42-43. They were the ones who after Jesus’ resurrection paid large sums of money to the soldiers who had guarded the tomb of Jesus. They told them, **“You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep,’”** Matthew 28:13. From this we can learn that what Jesus foretold of his suffering and death at the hands of these Jewish religious leaders was fulfilled. Later on, after Jesus’ ascension into heaven, Peter told the people on Pentecost, **“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead,”** Acts 2:23-24.

May we, then, draw this conclusion that Jesus suffered and died on the cross simply as a martyr? Is it correct to say, as the modern theologians do, that Jesus suffered and died for a cause that was not accepted by the majority of people? The Social Gospel preachers even compare men like Dr. Martin Luther King with Jesus as one who died as a martyr fighting for an unpopular cause. But, this is all wrong! It is altogether wrong to compare Jesus Christ with any mere man who has suffered a violent death. It is certainly foolishness to speak of Jesus’ work and compare it with the efforts of civil rights leaders. Jesus did not come to make this world a better place in which to live, but he came to redeem the sinful world.

There is one word in our text that puts the work of Jesus and his suffering, death and resurrection in the right perspective. That is the word **“must”**. Jesus said of himself **“he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** Because of this word **“must”**, we say that Jesus in foretelling his suffering, death and resurrection emphasizes the divine necessity of his suffering, death and resurrection. Divine necessity means that it had to be as Jesus foretold because that was God’s plan of salvation for mankind. Jesus’ death was not by chance or by accident or because man planned it that way. God planned it that way from all eternity. Unless Jesus suffered, died on the cross, and rose again, sinful mankind would not be saved from sin and everlasting death.

So also God foretold all these things in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to write of these things hundreds of years before they happened. Isaiah, for example, foretold, **“The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,”** Isaiah 53:6-7. In agreement with that prophecy John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as **“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** John 1 29. Because this was God’s plan for man’s salvation, Peter could also speak of it on Pentecost and say, **“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge,”** Acts 2:23.

Not only was it a divine necessity that Jesus suffer and die, but his resurrection on the third day was also a divine necessity. The resurrection of Jesus was the divine proof that his work of redemption was accepted by God the Father for the atonement of all sins of all people. It was God’s way of declaring to the world that all sinners now stand before him as righteous and holy for Jesus’ sake. This is what the Bible teaches in these words, **“He was delivered over to death for our sins and raised to life for our justification,”** Romans 4:25. Jesus’ work of redemption was a most precious gift of God in which we should rejoice and for which we should thank God.

How strange, then, the words of Peter in our text sound in our ears as we hear how Peter rebuked the Lord Jesus and said this should not happen to him! We want to learn that **Jesus rebuked Peter for his human interference.**

## 2.

Our text tells us, **“Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’”** Peter had just spoken for all the disciples in confessing Jesus. He said, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”** Matthew 16:16. But it is evident that there was a lack of understanding as to what Jesus as the Christ would do and what would happen to him in carrying out his work of redemption. It

shocked Peter to think of Jesus being delivered over to the Jewish leaders to be put to death. He overlooked that Jesus had also foretold his glorious resurrection. He took Jesus aside and told him that by the mercy of God this suffering and death should never happen to him. What Jesus spoke of as a divine necessity, Peter thought of as a monstrous mistake!

Immediately Jesus turned to Peter and rebuked him. ***“Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*** In the strongest language Jesus spoke to Peter, calling him Satan. Jesus recognized in Peter’s words the tempting voice of Satan. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry Satan had tempted Jesus to give up his work of redemption and bow down to him. Now, Satan through Peter was again tempting Jesus not to go through with the terrible suffering and death. But if Jesus yielded to this temptation, man’s salvation could not be accomplished. So Jesus told Peter that his objection to his suffering and death was a ***“stumbling block”*** to him. What Peter was saying to Jesus is that he should not suffer and die, that he should not carry out his work of redemption. That was what we call human interference with God’s plan of Salvation. Peter was thinking as a sinful man thinks, but not as God thinks. Peter had human ideas contrary to God’s plans. Peter meant to show his love for Jesus in telling him that he should not suffer and die, but he was wrong and needed to be rebuked.

People can no longer interfere with Jesus’ redemptive work because it has been completed. On the cross Jesus said, ***“It is finished!”*** John 19:30. But false teachers are still trying to interfere with the **proclamation** of the Gospel of Christ crucified. Some think of Jesus’ suffering and death as “old-fashioned blood theology.” They deny that Jesus’ suffering and death can save sinners. They deny that Jesus rose from the dead for our justification. They deny that all people became sinful through Adam’s fall into sin and so are denying that Jesus’ work of redemption was necessary. They deny that the Bible is God’s Word and ridicule us as being behind the times if we still believe whatever the Bible says.

Peter looked to the cross in his human weakness and wanted to keep Jesus from suffering and dying. False teachers look to the cross and ridicule the redemptive work of our Savior. May we look to the cross and say,

***“Lamb of God, we fall before Thee, Humbly trusting in Thy cross.  
That alone be all our glory; All things else are only dross.***

***”Thee we own a perfect Savior, Only Source of all that’s good.  
Every grace and every favor Comes to us through Jesus’ blood.”*** Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 358:1-2)

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