

HAVE IN MIND THE THINGS OF GOD

Matthew 16:21-23

TEXT: *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. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

The day of his crucifixion was drawing close. Time for instructing his disciples was running out for Jesus, and we can note that what Jesus had been teaching over the past three years was now being told to them with directness and clarity: ***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.*** According to Matthew's account before us, Jesus had just asked his disciples a question to see how well they had been listening: ***(Jesus) asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Well said, Peter! Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.*** And then Jesus, referring to the nickname he himself had given Peter, said: ***I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*** Mtt 16

However, in the very next verse Jesus calls Peter, Satan: ***Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.*** What??? How could Peter go "Simon the blessed" to Satan in just a few verses? Jesus makes it clear to Peter, those disciples and to us when warns Peter that he does not have in mind the things of God. That is a tragic error that moves a person from the status of a saint to the status of a damnable ally of Satan.

It's very important that we know these things, that we HAVE IN MIND THE THINGS OF GOD. God's word reveals that God's things are; but, Without God's Word no one can know the things of God.

Jesus clearly tells us what these "things of God" are: ***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.*** What does God's Word say about what Jesus says here? The disciples who were about to witness the horror of Jesus' crucifixion had it revealed to them from men like Moses who wrote down the first Gospel promise when the Lord said to Satan: ***I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*** Ge 3 Jesus would suffer at the hands of Satan as he delivers the mortal blow to Satan's head. That would be bloody. David wrote down the very thoughts that would go through Jesus heart and mind during his crucifixion in Psalm 22: ***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me ... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. ... they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.*** What were they thinking when they read this ancient Psalm? Then the great prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 53: ***He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*** Did they not read and ponder these things? These are the THINGS OF GOD!

Paul wrote to a young preacher named Timothy: ***(God) wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*** 1 Tim 2 And when he stood before Pontius Pilate Jesus said: ***My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place. ... In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*** Jn 18

Anything else is from Satan, a distraction, A TRAP! Without God's word no one can know the things of God, and no one can know of his salvation.

How would it feel to be called Satan by the Lord Jesus himself? Can you imagine how Peter felt? On

minute he is called “blessed by God” and a “rock,” and the next minute he is call “Satan!” The knowledge of our salvation is just that serious to God who so loved the world that he sent Jesus, his only-begotten Son. To be called “Satan” is a name Peter didn’t want to hear applied to him again, nor would any of want ever to hear the Lord say to us what he says he will indeed say to many false Christians. Jesus said: ***Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*** Mt 7
Satan’s trap for Christians was, is and always will be to question and change God’s Word so that we no longer know what God wants.

That’s what the word “stumbling block” means. Jesus called Peter a “stumbling block.” Actually, the Greek word used in this passage means more than just something that can cause someone to stumble. The Greek word refers to a trap that causes a scandal. What Jesus was saying to Peter was that he was just like Satan who was trying to entrap Jesus into the sin of doubting his purpose. That would surely be a scandal of all scandals! But Jesus didn’t get trapped. The Bible says: ***Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*** He 12 Without God’s Word Peter actually talked like Satan. But with God’s Word, he would not grow weary and lose heart.

Because we are like Peter, we can easily be trapped and deceived by Satan and lose heart and even our faith. The way to salvation is littered with the dead souls of Christians who have been deceived by Satan and have lost their faith. Satan’s trap is exposed in Scripture when he said to Eve: ***Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'*** ***The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*** First Satan questioned God’s Word. That’s ALWAYS how he sets the trap. Then he contradicts God’s Word: ***You will not surely die, ... For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*** Then, SNAP! The jaws of death slam shut: ***When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*** Ge 3 Without God’s Word to guide and strengthen us, we will be trapped.

Do not fall to the trap. So many have succumbed to the ways of man and of this sinful world, living contrary to God’s Commandments, justifying their sin, imagining that there is no condemnation for those who do not know the ways of God thinking that there is no hell. Jesus was not gentle with Peter when he began to lecture Jesus about the way of salvation. Nor should we be gentle with those who teach false doctrine or despise God’s Word and sacrament. For without God’s Word there is absolutely no way to know what Jesus calls, the THINGS OF GOD, which are forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Hold fast to the preaching of God’s Word and the Sacraments. Parents, work with your children as they learn from the Catechism the things of God. Impress upon them that without God’s Word, they cannot know anything but the ways of man. And look at how that’s working for the people of this world! Amen.