

J.J.

GOD'S GREATEST CONCERN
Matthew 16:21-28

ANNOUNCEMENT :

Reminder again that there will be no summer camp this year
Reminder that to bring your tithes and offering to Kuya Met's house.

INTRODUCTION :

The story is told of a prosperous, young investment banker who was driving his new BMW on a mountain road. As he veered around one sharp turn, he lost control and began sliding off the road. The car went off the cliff. He was able to jump out of the car before the car fell. A trucker saw what happened and stopped to help him. He saw the young man, looking down the cliff, crying and saying, "My BMW...my new BMW." The trucker saw that the right arm of the man is missing. So he said to the young man, "You have a bigger problem than that. Your arm is missing." The young man noticed that his arm is missing and then cried and said, "My Rolex. My new Rolex."

The Bible says :

Matthew 16: 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What you are concerned about shows what's important to you?

Things that people are concerned about

1. Money
2. Reputation or Image
3. Food

Today, God is going to tell us His concern.

Matthew 16: 21 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, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

PRAY

Background :

Matthew 16: 21 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, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

In Matthew 16:13-20 We have to remember that God the Father revealed to Peter that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He is the Saviour, Messiah.

Matthew 16 : 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

Now as we read, Peter came from being a person receiving a revelation from God BLESSED ARE YOU to being rebuked, GET BEHIND ME SATAN

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

WHY? We'll know later.

Sidestep : Imagine, Peter, super high and now being rebuked.

I shared this to my son before, the Bible has many examples that **GREAT TEMPTATION COMES RIGHT AFTER A SPIRITUAL HIGH** and that's the time we need to be most careful.

Peter himself experienced this, twice!!! Here and when he promised to Jesus that he will not leave Jesus and then denied Him. THAT'S WHY PETER HIMSELF WROTE!!

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Earlier, you have to remember that his answer was influenced by God by declaring that Jesus is the Saviour, the son of the living God... But now Jesus knows that Peter is being influenced by Satan and that's why Jesus said to Peter.

You see this? Satan's role is to always block the purposes of God – the concerns of God.

Remember this : What concerns you is what's important to you. And your purpose in life revolves around what's important to you.

Illustration : Remember the story of the businesswoman that attended our church in the Philippines. She went to our church because she was experiencing some problems and she was being encouraged. She was very faithful in attending church and Bible studies and even finished reading the entire Bible.

But one day, she was suddenly not attending church anymore. So I went to her in her office and she was rearranging her furniture. I asked why she was re-arranging her furniture and she said, it's because she wants to have good feng-shui. (I already taught her before that these things, "feng-shui" and etc are not good and the Bible mentions that it doesn't come from God. Ref Gal 5:19-21) Then I asked her, why she wasn't going to church anymore and she said, "Pastor, ever since I started attending your church my business started to go down."

What concerns you is what's important to you. And your purpose in life revolves around what's important to you.

Be careful what you are concerned about. Are you concerned about God and the things of God? Are you concerned about doing God's will? Are you concerned about the concerns of God?

Here you will see men's concerns :

I. SELF-PROMOTION

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

NOW WHY? Peter and his disciples had a different idea of what the Messiah is all about. They thought he's a political messiah who would deliver them from the hardships and cruelty of life during their time.

The disciples thought that Jesus came in order to take power and when He gets into power then of course, as His disciples, they expect to get a lion's share of that power.

Proof : *Mark 10:35-44*

The Request of James and John when they asked Jesus to let them sit at his right and his left in your glory.

Here's the reaction of the other ten disciples when they heard about this.

Mark 10:41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

The story shows the other disciples were indignant simply because they wanted that spot that James and John were asking.

How do we know that? It's because Jesus had to teach them they needed to be a servant.

Mark 10: 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

That's why Jesus Christ rebuked Peter.

It's because it looks like Peter was concerned about Jesus BUT our Lord knows what's inside his heart.

It's because if they lose Jesus, then all of their "sacrifices" to gain glory for themselves would have been for naught.

Satan's udyok would always be..."unahin mo sarili mo." Which brings us to the next concern.

II. SELF-PRESERVATION

This is the reason why followed-up His words with

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

The primary concern of man is himself – his own happiness, his survival, his own interests.
But the problem with men is he is trying to find happiness by himself. That's why Jesus gave the formula...

deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me - D.C.F.

Deny themselves, means to forget about yourself

Deny themselves apareomai – to distance from oneself

Take up their cross - People in those times know when they see someone carrying a cross, that person is on his way to death.

But it doesn't end there...

Christ said...*and follow Me.*

Why? Because the promise of Christ is this

25 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

The true way to find a full life is to follow Him.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

And when we follow Him, we don't have to worry about anything.

Matthew 6: 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

LISTEN CAREFULLY : Allow me to do a little sidestep so that you get the full benefit of this verse. Now, some people use Matthew 6:33 and that's why they are attending church, tithing and etc which are all good things.

But their real concern is not really the kingdom of God and following God...their concern is this...

and all these things will be given to you as well.

And that's the reason, when they don't get what they want or if something bad happens to them or they are having a hard time in life, they leave God because they reason out, we are seeking God's kingdom, we are attending church, giving to missions, tithing and trying to follow God and yet this happened to me and why am I having a hard time.

REMEMBER THIS : MORE THAN OUR ACTIONS, GOD IS LOOKING AT OUR HEARTS.

Quote : "THE HEART (WILL, SPIRIT) is precisely what God observes and addresses in human beings. He cares little or nothing for outward show." - Dallas Willard (Renovation of the Heart)

AND as I've mentioned before, GOD will test us just like **He tested Abraham** to show us what's really inside our hearts.

And how does our Lord usually test us? He's going to test us by either taking away or asking us if we are willing to give up what's currently important to us more than Him. Just like how He tested Abraham if he will be willing to sacrifice His son.

So my question to you is this : What's more important in your life right now more than God? Is it your family? Is it your work? Is it your reputation?

It's easy to say, God is more important to me than anything else. But the test of the pudding is in the eating.

- If God is asking you to give up your job to follow Him, will you do it?
- If God has taken a loved one from you, will you still follow Him?
- If somebody in church offended you or besmirched your reputation (pinahiya ka), or you were rebuked, will you still go to church?

This is the reason why Jesus said,

Luke 14: 25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

Are you really a disciple of Christ or just part of the crowd?

Which brings us to the number one concern of many people.

III. SELF-ENRICHMENT

26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world,

Now the number one concern of man is money, money, money...thinking that it's money that will satisfy them. The more money you have, the happier you will be.

Remember the first verse we read earlier

Matthew 6: 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

It is connected with money. I've always mentioned that God's greatest competition for worship, loyalty and attention is money.

Matthew 6: 24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

But Time and time again, it's proven that money is not the cause of happiness.

Quote : "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer." Jim Carrey

Another illustration :

6 weeks before he died, a reporter asked Elvis Presley, "Elvis, when you first started playing music, you said you wanted to be rich, famous and happy. Are you happy?"
"I'm lonely as hell" he replied

What is the cause of happiness?

1 Timothy 6: ... But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

CONTENTMENT IS THE CAUSE OF HAPPINESS.

Look at what happens to people who are not content.

9 Those who want to be rich, however, fall into temptation and become ensnared by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.

Now you might say, is it sinful and wrong to be rich and to have money... OF COURSE NOT!!!

Look at the next verse on this :

1 Timothy 6: 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. By craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows....

Remember again : God will test us on what's really inside our hearts.

AND ALSO remember what happened when Abraham passed the test? THAT'S THE TIME HE GOT CONFIRMATION OF THE BLESSING!!!

That's why :

Matthew 6: 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

In short : we need to be concerned with God's concerns...

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

This now brings us God's greatest concern!!!

26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

THE SOUL OF MAN!!!

God's greatest concern is not HEALTH, it's not WEALTH, HIS GREATEST CONCERN IS THE SOUL OF MAN.

Some people might say, God's concern is His glory. WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED IF WE GIVE GLORY TO GOD. *1 Corinthians 10:31 Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

But God is not concerned for His glory. How can He be concerned of something that He intrinsically has?

Icebreaker Illustration : Example : I am intrinsically handsome.. why will I be concerned if I am handsome or not.

Of course, there are other things God is concerned about LIKE the U.S.P. Unity of His people, Safety of His people (from the devil) and Purity of His people.

Why do I know that's the concern of our Lord? Remember, HE PRAYED FOR IT IN JOHN 17. Those were the things that our Lord asked in John 17.

But again, the greatest concern of God are the souls of men.

What is the proof that it is God's greatest concern?

Illustration : Remember again when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his own son, the one he loves...Isaac to find what's really important to Abraham.

GOD SACRIFICED HIS OWN BELOVED SON IN ORDER THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM WILL SPEND ETERNITY WITH HIM.

John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

This is the reason why Jesus added this :

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Good businessmen know that the best investment are long-term investments that give the highest reward...THE HIGHEST REWARD IS THE ONE THAT JESUS WILL GIVE. THE FOOLISH INVESTOR ARE THE ONES THAT INVEST KNOWING THAT ONE OF THESE DAYS IT WILL BE LOST ANYWAY... SO IF YOU INVEST ALL YOUR ENERGY, ALL YOUR LIFE IN THE PURSUIT OF MONEY KNOWING THAT YOU WILL LOSE IT ANYWAY, WHAT GOOD IS IT?

The Bible says :

Matthew 6: 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If souls are our greatest concern, then this is the reason we tithe, we give to missions, we go to missions, we share this Facebook live to others and etc.

Let me have this one last word.

This COVID situation, we hear a lot of when are we returning back to normal or returning back to work and etc. No problem with that.

But more than that, pray that God will not only return things to normal BUT THERE WILL BE A REVIVAL IN OUR OWN SOULS, A REVIVAL IN OUR CHURCHES AND A REVIVAL IN OUR LAND.

It's because God's greatest concern is the souls of men.

Now if this is God's greatest concern... shouldn't it be that it must also be our greatest concern?

S.G.D.