

RFCoG Sermon – August 9, 2026

Scripture:

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NRSV)

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Matthew 16:21–23 (NRSV)

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”

23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”



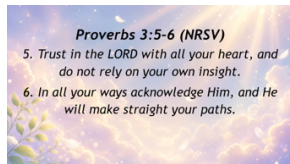
Prayer:

Thank you for allowing me to share with you today. It is always a privilege getting to do so. Let us start by going to the Lord with prayer.

Lord, thank you for allowing me to share your word. Please open our ears to hear, soften our hearts so we turn to you, and take away our pride so we can submit to your authority and Lordship. We love you, LORD. Thank you for all you do. In Jesus name, AMEN.

Introduction:

Today we will be looking at Matthew 16, but before we do so, let us first look at Proverbs 3. This will apply to what Peter, and the disciples are going through in Matthew 16, but it also applies to all of us today.



Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6 tell us, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.”

Are you trusting the Lord with all your heart? Am I? It is easy to say we are, but that is often easier said than done.

If you are anything like me, you pray, you think you have in mind what the LORD wants from you and how things should go, but then life has a way of going sideways!

What then? A lot of times we fall back on our own understanding.

We say, “That is NOT how the situation was SUPPOSED to play out, so I’m going to force it to go the way I WANT it to go!”

Does that sound like someone you know? Maybe something you’ve thought or attempted to do? I know it sounds like me on occasion.

I think I have life figured out. I think I know the path the LORD wants me to go down ... but then the LORD shows me a few twists and turns I didn’t see coming.

I can either struggle to fit a square peg into a round hole, OR I can submit, go to the LORD and say, “I TRUST in YOU, LORD. I am ignorant, help me not to rely on my own insight. Help me FOLLOW the path YOU have laid out and NOT one of my own making.”



The BIBLE is an amazing book. If someone says the Bible is boring, they are not reading it often enough.

It is FILLED with people that CONTINUALLY attempt to do this very thing, and the result is always the same ... it aligns with God's ultimate plan.

I've heard people say the God of the Old Testament is a God of Vengeance. News flash for them, the God of the Old Testament is the same God as the New Testament. That God came down and suffered so we may live.



When I read the Old Testament, I do not see a God only focused on vengeance, I see a God of LOVE and PATIENCE. Patience for a people who continually rely on their own insight and stray from HIS path, much like YOU and ME.

Proverbs 3:6 tells us, "In all your ways acknowledge HIM, and HE will make straight your paths."

Lesson for the day, we will learn that WE are going to end up where GOD wants us. Jonah learned this lesson in the past and we will continually learn it in the future. It is easier if we SUBMIT and TRUST. If we don't, we will end up PUSHING and PULLING and ultimately end up where GOD wants us anyway!

The LORD wants to guide us and bless us.

NOW, that does NOT mean if you give me \$100 the LORD will bless you with \$1000, *although I've included by Venmo in case you want to test that out! (just kidding).*



Peter's Rebuke:

Now, let's flip over to Matthew 16 where we see Simon, now known as Peter, fall into the same pit many of us fall into, trusting in his OWN understanding and NOT Gods.

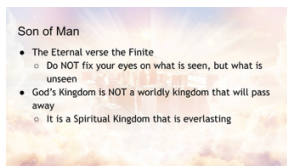
Review of 13-20:

First, let's briefly review passages 13 through 20 from last week's communion devotion.

In those passages, Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

Son of Man is a title Jesus commonly used when referring to himself. This title can be traced back to the Book of Daniel, chapter 7. To paraphrase:

With the clouds of Heaven, there came one like a Son of Man. To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. All peoples and nations should serve him, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed.



The title "Son of Man" served a few purposes, two of which are:

- It allowed Jesus to claim HIS Messianic status while getting to emphasize the nature of HIS mission –
 - The Eternal verse the Finite. Do not fix your eyes on what is seen, but what is unseen.
 - and His kingdom is not a worldly kingdom that will pass away, but a Spiritual Kingdom that is everlasting.

- This title also allowed Jesus to convey truths about himself and define the title as HE wants it defined.

Just like today, words and titles can start off meaning one thing, but as time progresses, those terms grow in meaning and soon you have misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Just look at something as “simple” as “Christian.” You can encounter someone who says, “I’m a Christian, too. My church affirms whoever and whatever you want to be, and the right to choose is healthcare, and love is love because God is love.”

(wait, what ... points every which way)

My Spanish professor at BGSU came in to class flustered one day and said, “I just passed by the Christian group in the free-speech zone. They called me a “RAHAB” and told me I am going to Hell!” She followed up by saying she is a Christian, a follower of Christ, and regularly attends church.

All that to say, even the term Christian can accumulate extra baggage that leaves people unsure what you mean when you say, “I AM a Christian.” It shouldn’t be that way, but that is the way it is.

When Jesus used the title, “Son of Man,” He told and showed people EXACTLY what it meant. There was no confusion among the religious leaders that were persecuting Him. Some people today like to think, “Jesus never claimed to be God.”

Those leaders were not confused. They knew exactly what He was claiming ... that the Son of Man was equal with God. That the Son of Man was God. This is why the high priest declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy!



When Jesus asks Simon Peter, “Who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”

Upon hearing this, Jesus gave praise to Peter, revealing to those around him that, “flesh and blood have not revealed this to him, but His Father in Heaven.”

When I read that, I can’t help but think of the dopamine hit Peter must have felt at that moment. An “Awe, Yea” moment! Much like when someone gets a “high five” from Pastor during Wednesday Bible study. (By the way, all are free to come ... it is fun and informative.)

To paraphrase the verses that follow, Jesus goes on to tell Peter, known as Simon at the time, that he is now known as Peter. Jesus tells his disciples that He will build His church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. That brings us to the passages for today, Matthew 16, verses 21-23.

Message:

In these three verses, we will see a shift in tone. Where Peter and the disciples were likely feeling energized and full of hope, things are about to change, and Jesus is going to teach them an important lesson. God’s plan differs greatly from the one the disciples thought they had figured out.

That is so often the case. We get energized, we get full of hope, but then we get full of SELF and full of pride. (*raise hand*) *GUILTY!*

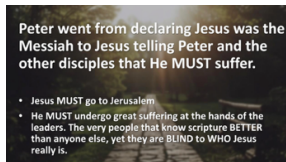
Read Matthew 16:21-23 again.

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples THAT he must go to Jerusalem AND undergo GREAT suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, AND be killed, AND on the third day be raised.

22 And Peter took him aside and began to REBUKE Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “GET BEHIND ME, SATAN! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind NOT on divine things BUT on human things.”

SHEW WEE, talk about reminding Peter of HIS place and HIS role.

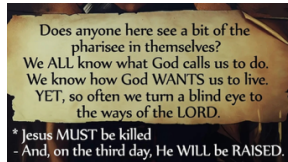


Peter went from declaring Jesus was the Messiah to Jesus telling Peter and the other disciples that He MUST suffer.

- Jesus MUST go to Jerusalem
- He MUST undergo great suffering at the hands of the leaders. The very people that know scripture BETTER than anyone else, yet they are BLIND to WHO Jesus really is.

These Elders, Chief Priests, and Scribes have read the prophecies. They know of the coming Messiah. They have heard and seen the miracles Jesus is doing, yet their hearts remain hardened.

Isaiah 35 tells us that, “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, AND the ears of the deaf unstopped; THEN shall the lame man LEAP like a deer, AND the tongue of the mute SING for JOY!”



Does anyone here see a bit of the pharisee in themselves? We ALL know what God calls us to do. We know how God WANTS us to live. YET, so often we turn a blind eye to the ways of the LORD.

- Jesus MUST be killed
- And, on the third day, He WILL be RAISED

AMEN!

I can imagine the disciples, and especially Peter, stopping in their tracks and being like, “WAIT, WHAT?!?”

Suffering and Death? This is the opposite of what many first century jews thought.



They were expecting the Messiah would bring VICTORY! If there was going to be death, it would be to HIS enemies, certainly not to the Messiah! They are likely thinking, “Where is the JUSTICE in THAT?”

This went against ALL their expectations.

One commentary notes, “The Jews eagerly awaited God’s intervention to FREE them from Rome’s domination and restore THEIR kingdom as an independent nation on THEIR Promised Land.”

Another commented, “Ordinary people dreamed of the Messiah bringing PEACE to the land, making crops SUCCEED, helping them raise children safely, with EVERYONE dwelling under their own vine and fig tree.”

Peter and the disciples had their worldview flipped upside down!

I want to pause for a moment and point this out.

This is not saying Peter, and the disciples were ignorant of everything. Peter had just said Jesus was the Messiah, which is TRUTH. They were knowledgeable in a great many things.

This is pointing out that Peter and the disciples cannot see God's entire plan, so they have filled the holes with their own understanding.

This is pointing out that WE, as fallen, finite beings, are to TRUST in God's PLAN and God's WAYS.

We must always remember what it says in Isaiah 55, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD."

We must also remember, the LORD is convicting and teaching us at different rates. Because of this, show love and patience to your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Patience is a virtue, so be willing to show grace to one another.

Peter's Response:

What is Peter's response to Jesus' reveal? Was it one of trust and acceptance?

It is almost as-if God keeps telling US to TRUST Him, yet WE never seem to LEARN!
The scripture of the prophets is full of stories when God reveals what MUST be done, yet HIS people continue to question HIS authority.

It was a rebuke of Jesus!

"God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."

It is almost as-if God keeps telling US to TRUST Him, yet WE never seem to LEARN!

The scripture of the prophets is full of stories when God reveals what MUST be done, yet HIS people continue to question HIS authority.

Take for instance the story of Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis 18 and 19 AND relate it to what Peter's response.

To paraphrase that story:



God is about to judge the wicked, revealing that Sodom and Gomorrah as well as its inhabitants will fall, yet Abraham intercedes and asks, “LORD, what if just fifty righteous are found? Will you spare the city and its people?”

With Abraham, God entertains his idea and says He will spare the city and its people if fifty are found. Of course, Abraham goes on to ask, “What about if forty-five are found? Thirty? Twenty?” He then says, “Will you spare the city if ten righteous are found?”

And how does it conclude? God was right all along. Scripture says, “The LORD went His way when He had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.”

Abraham learned a lesson that day, that God’s judgement would take place, just as God said, and no intercession could avert that judgement from taking place.

It does not say that God rebuked Abraham, quite the opposite. He let Abraham’s intercession play out.

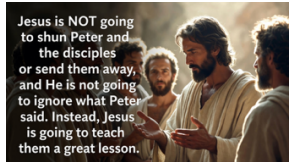
Yet, when Jesus replies to Peter, He REBUKES him!

Why might God not rebuke Abraham, yet choose to rebuke Peter?



This might be because, unlike Abraham, Peter had the writings of the Laws and the Prophets. Peter knows the writings of Isaiah 46 where it tells us,

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, “My purpose shall stand, and I WILL fulfill MY intention.”

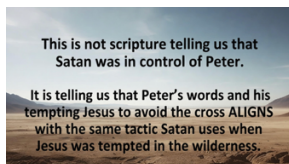


Jesus is NOT going to shun Peter and the disciples or send them away, and He is not going to ignore what Peter said. Instead, Jesus is going to teach them a great lesson.

Upon hearing Peter's rebuke, Jesus turned and said, "GET BEHIND ME, SATAN!"

The first reply from Peter, saying Jesus was the Messiah, was inspired by God. The later reply from Peter, rebuking Jesus, was inspired by Satan. Jesus goes on to say, "You are a stumbling block to me."

I can just imagine that Peter felt his heart fall to his stomach in that moment. That sinking feeling of shame and disappointment.



This is not scripture telling us that Satan was in control of Peter. It is telling us that Peter's words and his tempting Jesus to avoid the cross ALIGNs with the same tactic Satan uses when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.

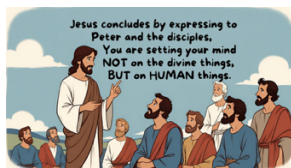
Taking a quick detour to Matthew 4, when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, it says,

- “The devil took him (Jesus) to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’”
- Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘Worship the LORD your God, and serve only Him.’”

Satan was tempting Jesus with the things of the world JUST as Peter was UNKNOWINGLY doing.

Satan and Peter were both implying that this world IS the treasure. This worldly existence IS what matters most.

Suffering and Death must NEVER happen to you, Jesus! You are the Messiah, after all.



Jesus concludes by expressing to Peter and the disciples, “You are setting your mind NOT on the divine things, BUT on HUMAN things.”

Reflection:

Pause, take a moment and reflect on what Jesus just told His disciples.

“You are setting your mind NOT on the divine things, BUT on HUMAN things.”

How often does this happen today? How often do we have this mindset?

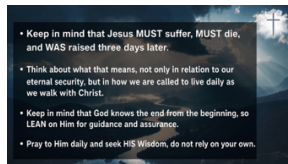
We can't make it to church, it's baseball / football season. I didn't wake up in time; I was out late having fun. I can't make it to Bible study; I have other priorities. Read the Bible? No thanks, I would rather scroll TikTok. Pray? Who has time to pray? Really?!

The lesson Jesus teaches is one of Honesty. Look at your priorities ... are they of this world, or are they of God?

Challenge:



And this is where I'll wrap up with a challenge to all of you. Read the rest of Matthew this week. It is only five verses, 24 through 28, but do so while keep in mind of our place in relation to God's.



- Keep in mind that Jesus MUST suffer, Jesus MUST die, and Jesus WAS raised three days later.
- Think about what that means, not only in relation to our eternal security, but in how we are called to live daily as we walk with Christ.
- Keep in mind that God knows the end from the beginning, so LEAN on Him for guidance and assurance.
- Pray to Him daily and seek HIS Wisdom, do not rely on your own.

Remember, like Peter, it is easy for all of us to do evil with good intentions. What is the old saying? "The road to hell is paved with good intentions?"

Peter had good intentions, but it was not the Father's Will. We can only have life through Jesus' Life, His Death, and His Resurrection.

AMEN!

Song:



Tonya is going to bless us with a song. Tonya, if you would, tell us what you are about to sing and why you chose that song.

https://youtu.be/Wm0b-Cbjs3w?si=qm-3W9BM6uoLkA_1