

Matthew Chapter 16

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Date: 05 April 2020

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles now then to Matthew in chapter 16. Matthew in chapter 16 beginning at verse 13.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say the Son of Man is? They replied, Some say John the Baptist.

Others say Elijah. Still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. What about you? he asked. Who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

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, 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.

[1 : 13] You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns. Then Jesus says to his disciples, Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it. But whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world yet lose their soul?

Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the past few weeks the government have been giving us several important directives as to how we can avoid spreading COVID-19.

What began as recommendations a few weeks ago have now become law so any breach can be punished by a fine or even by imprisonment. We must stay at home at all times except for certain essential journeys.

These essential journeys are described in the following way, taken from the government's own website. You can leave your home to shop for basic necessities such as food, medicine, taking exercise alone or with members of your own household for any medical need or to provide care for a vulnerable person, travelling for work purposes but only where they cannot work from home.

[2 : 50] Today, as you're well aware, is Palm Sunday, beginning of Holy Week, when we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem for the last time to the rapturous praise of his disciples.

That journey into Jerusalem was the beginning of the end for Jesus. In fact, it was the last leg of his life's journey. For within a week he would be crucified, die and be buried.

Nevertheless, Jesus' journey through life and his journey into Jerusalem and therefore to his death was the essential journey. The essential journey that Jesus had to make.

A journey in which he would make at any cost. A journey he had to make which would indeed be very dangerous for him. The final journey that was to bring his life on the earth to an end.

Now he began his essential journey, as we must begin all our essential journeys, by leaving home. Peter confessed rightly that Jesus is Son, the Son of the Living God.

[3 : 57] And so for him, his home was heaven. Although we cannot see heaven, touch heaven, feel heaven, even hear heaven to a certain degree, with the human eye or with the human senses, heaven is nonetheless very real.

Just as real as the universe that we inhabit. Heaven is God's domain. His home. It's his dimension. Not limited by time or space or even sight.

To take Jesus' essential journey, the Son of God gave up his home for a time. He entered into our broken and our sin-ravaged world.

Jesus says to his disciples in John 6, I have come down from heaven. Rightly and properly, on Thursday night, many people stood outside their houses and applauded and clapped for those NHS staff who leave the safety of their own homes and go to service in struggling hospitals.

So we should adore and we should applaud, we should praise the Lord Jesus who left the safety of heaven to serve us in our greatest need. The NHS staff make that journey from their home to hospital because they have a vital job to do.

[5 : 19] And Jesus came into this world on an essential journey because he has the essential job to do, the essential work to do. John 4, he explains again to his disciples about why he came into this world, to do the will of him who sent me and finish his work.

God's work. Jesus came to do the work that God sent him to do. An essential work, a vital work. He wasn't forced out of heaven. He wasn't bullied. He wasn't cajoled to leave heaven.

He left willingly out of love for us, out of concern for us, out of a desire to do for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves. And to accomplish this essential work, he not only had to leave his home, but he had to do something absolutely amazing.

He had to become one with us. He had to become human. He was and is forever the Son of God. That never changes and never has changed. But he humbled himself.

He took on our human nature with all its weaknesses, with all its limitations, with the sufferings that we share. Paul writes to the church in Philippians in chapter 2 and explains this incredible step down, as it were, this incredible change.

[6 : 39] Jesus Christ, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

The job that he came to do, the work that was so essential for him, he could only do by leaving heaven. He could only do by taking to himself a human nature, becoming one like us.

We know that not everyone can do the work of a doctor or a nurse. It's a job that requires years of preparation and training to equip that person to be able to save a life.

But there's only one person who has the preparation, who's been equipped to carry out the work that Jesus was born to accomplish. There's only one person who is both God and man.

He alone could come on that essential journey to do that essential work, to make that essential purchase.

[7 : 55] We're unable to go shopping for all the things that we used to be able to go shopping for. We can't go out at this present time except for those necessities of food and medicine and things like that.

Can't go clothes shopping or shoe shopping. Can't go shopping for books or for electrical items. You can't go and buy yourself a new car. We can only leave our homes to purchase the basic necessities we're told.

The things that we really, really need. Jesus made his essential journey and became a human, a man with us so that he could purchase for us what we need most of all.

Our greatest need. So he could buy what we cannot do without. He explains it in John chapter 10. I came so that they could have real and eternal life.

More and better life than they ever dreamt of. The purchase that Jesus made that we might have life, eternal life, was very costly to him.

[9 : 03] Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 1, For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver and gold that you were redeemed or purchased from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ.

On the cross, as Jesus died, he purchased for us eternal life. He purchased for us salvation with his own blood, with his own life, the most precious, the most costly, the most expensive.

The terrible coronavirus that is taking many people's lives at this time is just one consequence of sin.

Not those individual people's sin, but sin in general, this sin that has broken and corrupted our world. But there's an even worse consequence of sin, worse even than sickness and illness and suffering and death and terrible as they truly are.

There's something worse than that. Well, because of our sin, all of us have been cut off from God, the God who created us and the God who loves us. Sin is anything that treats God as my enemy, that treats him as my opposition instead of the friend that he truly is.

[10 : 36] Colossians chapter 1, we're told, you were alienated from God, were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. An honest examination of your life, your thinking, your actions will prove that this is true.

All of us have to acknowledge that we have lived this way as to our choices, to our words, to the very way we live. We have lived in total disregard of God.

By doing so, we have reaped a bitter harvest, bitter consequences, because our sin has brought us both death, physical, and eternal.

So Paul writes in Romans 6, the wages, the rewards, the consequence of sin is death and we see that around about us but it's something more than just that physical death because the Bible goes on to say in Romans 6, 25, Jesus has provided healing for us now for it says the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Death is death in relation to God, separation from God, alienation from God, be cut off from Him both now and forever.

[12 : 06] But Jesus has purchased a full and complete pardon from God on our behalf for all our sins. He has brought bought for us complete and everlasting forgiveness by His death in our place, suffering the consequences of our sin.

He died and was cut off from God in our place. So Paul writes in Ephesians 1, in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace. It's not something that we've deserved or earned but it's God's loving grace. That's why God the Father sent His Son into this world for God so loved the world He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

That's why Jesus willingly came to secure for us a new relationship with God now and for eternity. A new relationship with the God who made us and provides for all our needs and gives us again and again such good gifts.

This God who is our Creator who we have dreadfully used and whose generosity we have constantly abused. Jesus did it.

[13 : 28] He made that essential journey. He entered Jerusalem. He made that He did that essential work of purchasing for us full salvation and eternal life.

But of course that wasn't the end of His essential journey. For on the third day on that Easter Sunday as we'll celebrate next week He rose from the dead. He's alive.

That's why we can be sure that what He did for us and has done for us we can enjoy now. He's alive. And through Him through His resurrection life we live too.

But because Jesus made that essential journey the essential journey it means that we also must make an essential journey too.

An essential journey that no one can make for us or on our behalf. We must do it ourselves. We must come to Christ. We must leave our sin behind.

[14 : 35] Even though our life of sin has been our home ever since our birth we must now return to God our Maker. We must return with repentance and faith.

See all that Jesus has done for us all that He's accomplished by making that journey from heaven to earth by making that journey to the cross and suffering and die all that purchase that He has accomplished through His blood for us.

It won't do us any good at all if we refuse His help. Imagine perhaps it's not too difficult someone who's severely ill goes to hospital and there they meet a doctor who tells them that they have coronavirus or something like that something awful but the doctor says to them that they cannot but the doctor says to them you've got to receive this treatment you've got to receive this medication you've got to go on this vent and they say no no I don't want it I don't want it I'll just be fine as I am I'm sure I'll manage to get through without your help.

How foolish that person would be how daft when the doctors put their life at risk and they've done everything necessary and prepared everything for them and yet they refuse it how foolish then even more so for those of us who know that we have sinned who know that we are separated from God who know that ultimately our life is but fleeting and empty to refuse the gift of God in Jesus to refuse the help that only he can give to say I don't need you I'll be fine I'll make it without you let's be realistic friends has the world how has the world got on without God how have men and women in our western society really got on without the living God are we happier no are we more content no are we richer yes but we know very well that money cannot buy what our souls long for dear friends we need to recognize the terrible danger that we're in eternal sorrow and eternal separation are all that's ahead of us because we have chosen that way of life surely now's the time to cry out for help now's the time for us to call upon Jesus who alone can save us who alone can transform us who alone can give us life even in the midst of death everything is ready everything is prepared

Jesus assures us he encourages us he tells us that God wants us will you will you make that journey back to God the way has been prepared the price has been paid the life is for their taking let's pray together thank you Lord Jesus that because of your great love for us you were willing to give up your home in heaven and to come into this world thank you that as you rode into [18:29] Jerusalem you were very well aware of what must take place you told your disciples again and again the son of man must suffer many things and die we thank you that in spite of knowing all that was ahead of you in spite of knowing the suffering that you would go through not just physically but spiritually as you suffered and tasted of what it means to be separated and cut off from God yet you went such is your love for us such is your love for the people of this world thank you that you have purchased for us what we need most of all forgiveness life pray again oh lord for those who have still not come to you who have not made that essential journey that step of faith oh lord i pray that you would speak to them and draw them and woo them and call them to see that awaiting them is only love and tenderness and kindness and forgiveness awaiting them is only life but for a look but for a cry pray lord that many during this very sad and difficult time may find life in your son jesus christ and come to him pray again oh lord that you would be with us and watch over us in the coming week help us oh lord that we might live such lives to show lord that we are those who are your people those who have experienced that life and that love we ask it in jesus name amen dear friends we are going to sing again my love is my song rather is love unknown my saviour's love to me it's a wonderful hymn and speaks of echoes of that palm sunday as people cried out the name of jesus please keep on keeping on please keep yourself safe please pray for one another yes phone one another be in touch with one another make sure that those who are lonely are not alone but remember always for each of us that the lord has promised never to leave us nor forsake us speak to you again soon bye