

Sermon notes: August 31, 2020 **Focus:** Scandalous in the Gospel

Readings

Jesus says to Peter “Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me.” How Peter took a dive in only a few verses. Earlier, Peter got the award for calling Jesus “the Messiah, the son of the living God.” He even got the keys to the kingdom. But now Peter is a Satan and a stumbling block.



The stumbling block The noun skandalon, σκάνδαλον, means "to trip somebody up" and it's a word picture of little rocks that you trip on. Skandalon as a noun shows up 15 times in the Bible and the verb form appears 29 times. All that to say, it's a well-used word. The modern word scandal is the great grandchild of skandalon. If you really want to nerd out, go here for all the biblical references.

So, Peter is ‘tripping up’ Jesus. Jesus has not stopped loving Peter. Jesus does

however use some very intense language like calling Peter Satan and stumbling block. The skandalon for me are the clothes seemingly placed intentionally in hallways by my family that I trip on at 5am. Jesus calling Peter “a scandal” is a shock treatment to remind Peter (and us) that there is only one person who can step over our dirty laundry without tripping.

And now Satan

The accuser! I think accuser is a better translation for us than Satan. The pitchfork guy with the tail – you can blame Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516). Biblically, devilish words often mean something like opposing legal counsel and not a red guy goading sinners with a pitch fork. The devil, Lucifer, Satan, the snake almost always shows up to contradict God's will. If you think of Satan as one who contradicts / gets in the way of God's will, then Peter can easily be Satan.



Following Jesus and the cross

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?”

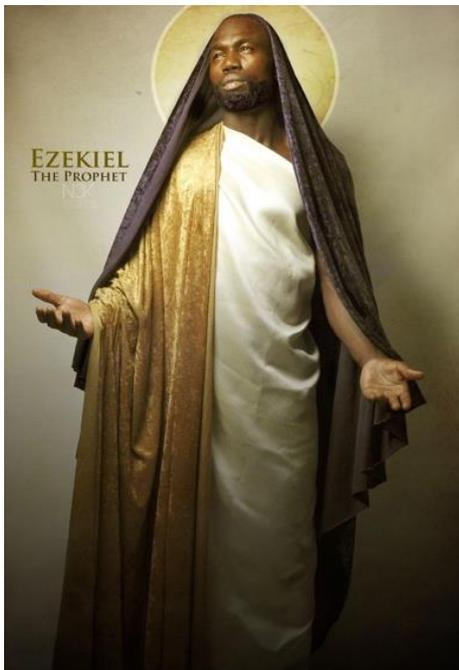


My fellow stumbling blocks and contradictors, we find our balance and purpose in the cross. The cross strips away our conceits and the cross is a vision to lead us.

The cross and maybe **not** denying yourself

For those of you who think you are nearly perfect and wonderful, Matthew 16 is a great face value reading. So, take up the cross. Yet I know that some of you have only known loss and suffering. Matthew 16 might seem to add insult to injury. For you, you who are beaten down – here’s another scripture. It’s Ezekiel 16:6-7. This prophetic text is part of a long story that Ezekiel tells.

It’s a story of Israel being restored. A baby is noticed, taken in, and cared for by a traveler. The traveler – God - picks up the baby, which is Israel. God says, “Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood, I said to you, “Live!” I made you grow like a plant of the field. “



Live - that might be the hardest thing you can imagine maybe harder than beating yourself up. Jesus calls you to live out loud. You are meant to thrive in the Lord. Some of us need to die to ourselves and take up the cross. Others of us, need to live boldly because the cross has been made into a way toward life. If you are chronically down on yourself, the Lord says “live!” and is leading you home. Wherever you are, up or down, Jesus is here. May you find the way of the cross the way of life however, you get there.

Todd

Part of a photographic series by James C. Lewis