

Sermon notes: September 12, 2021 **Focus:** Scandalous

Lectionary Readings

Jesus says to Peter “Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me.” Earlier, Peter was calling Jesus “the Messiah, the son of the living God.” He even got the keys to the kingdom. But now Peter is a piece of rubble, a stumbling block on the path to the cross.

The stumbling block

The noun skandalon, σκάνδαλον, means literally "to trip somebody up" and it's a word picture of little rocks that you trip over when hiking. Skandalon, as a noun, shows up 15 times in the Bible and the verb form appears 29 times. The modern word scandal is the great grandchild of skandalon. All the biblical references are [here](#).

So, Peter is ‘tripping up’ Jesus despite his good intentions. Jesus uses some very intense language. He calls Peter a satan (accuser: more later) and a stumbling block. It's sort of shock treatment to remind Peter to think about what he is saying and doing. Most of us will endure well meaning, but poorly placed words. On the flip side, we offer little bits of rubble that we think are helpful but are just trip hazards.

And now Satan

The accuser! I think accuser is a better translation for us than red faced Satan. Something like opposing legal council is a better word picture. Devils, lucifers, and satans 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 a satan.

Following Jesus and the cross

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, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 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.

Way of the Cross, the Way of Life

For those of you who think you are nearly perfect and wonderful, Mark is a great face-value reading: take up the cross. Yet, I know that some of you have only known loss and suffering. Jesus' words might seem to add insult to injury.

Live - that might be the hardest thing you can imagine maybe harder than beating yourself up. Jesus calls you to live. You are meant both to forget yourself and 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. The way of the cross is the way of life. 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.

Meditation

Last year about this time, I did a meditation with you (online) when Matthew's version of "get behind me, satan," was read. In 2020, I shared a meditation shortly after we stopped being foster parents. I think that meditation still holds water a year later. So, the sermon will finish with a short meditation on the way of the cross as the way of life. This meditation can also be a vessel to hold the 20th anniversary of 9/11 yesterday.

Todd