



Sept. 3, 2023 Mt. 16: 21-28 & Ex. 3 :1-15

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[Zoom Connection](#)

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Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [How is Love Calling Us](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Get Behind Me Satan](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[U tube link](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Satan historically has been the one who keeps God honest as in the book of Job. Down through scriptural history the role and understanding of that which comes to be known as Satan undergoes significant development. At first it was more of an energy source. The source of entropy that possessed the power to drag God's creative process back into the unformed chaos. Eventually that power becomes personalized and is given a name that begins with a capitol S rather than a small s. It is useful to see the satan role as all the energy that comes together to make us choose out of fear instead out of love. Once we locate the source of energy, we can freely decide instead of being compelled to do something. We are now working from a position of strength instead of weakness. Temptations get their names from those places we are prone to be weak.

Mt. 16: 21-28

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, chief priests and 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 **things of God**, but **the things of men.**" 24 Then Jesus said to his **disciples**, "If anyone would **come after me**, he must **deny himself** and **take up his cross** and **follow me**. 25 For whoever wants to **save his life** will **lose** it, but whoever **loses his life** for me will **find** it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the **whole world**, yet **forfeits his soul**? Or what can a man give in **exchange** for his **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 he has done. 28 I tell you the **truth**, some who are standing here will not **taste death** before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Often our strongest temptations arise from those who want what they think is best for us. Has anyone been your Peter? Have you been anyone's Peter?

PRAYER: Lord, this little poem seems to say it all.

I put off what I have to do / with just another cup, / and all those postponed duties / my how they add up.

Easy to say, "Get behind me," / if he came in horns and tail. / Disguised as just another cup, / his tactics seldom fail. Help me as I learn to recognize the temptations that might lure me into putting off who you invite me to be today. Amen.

(GREAT IMPOSTOR: Mary C. Ferris NCR 8/13/99)

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

FROM THAT TIME ON: Jesus now seems to know that he needs to take Jerusalem head on if he is to have any hope of fulfilling his mission to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel".

Can you remember a time when you had to take something 'head on' in order to accomplish something? Can this memory help you to understand Jesus' decision?

DISCIPLES: Once again the disciples (ones who are under a discipline) are being pulled into a deeper understanding of God.

Is this text pulling you into a deeper understanding of God? If so, how?

HE MUST GO: Jesus feels compelled to face whatever it takes to challenge the power structure that is keeping the people from his understanding of God's unconditional love.

Have you ever had to face something harsh in order to help someone know that you love them? If so, what kept you from backing out?

JERUSALEM: Since Jerusalem was seen as the place where God resided on earth, Jerusalem was the place where Jesus had to confront the errors that flowed from there.

Are you aware of any errors in understanding God coming from a source that should know the truth? If so, where is your 'Jerusalem'?

SUFFER / KILLED: Jesus knew his scriptures well, and he knew that anyone who attempted to confront the conventional wisdom about God usually had to suffer and often was killed.

Does scripture study endanger your life in any way?

ELDERS / CHIEF PRIESTS / TEACHERS OF THE LAW: All of these people were the guardians of the status quo in religious thought. Each group had a vested interest in keeping things the same.

Have you ever had a vested interest in keeping someone ignorant of God's unconditional love? Did you think that you were protecting them for their own good? Do you think these religious leaders felt that way?

THIRD DAY: Without our modern methods of determining death, people could be laid out in the family tomb only to discover them not dead at all. Therefore, it was not believed that a person was truly dead until three days had elapsed.

What is Jesus teaching us by using the number three?

RAISED: Jesus firmly believed that God would raise him from the dead to prove that death was not the end.

Why do you think this was so important to Jesus? Why is it important today?

PETER: Peter cannot imagine God letting anything harmful happen to Jesus.

Have you ever reacted like Peter when someone was heading into disaster and you didn't want to see him or her get hurt? Do you think you would have said the same thing to Jesus if you were in Peter's shoes?

REBUKE / NEVER: Peter uses harsh words to deter Jesus from such an unthinkable action.

What does this tell you about Peter?

GET BEHIND ME SATAN: Jesus must have had a memory of 'been there, done this' when he was tempted in the desert. This leads him to identify Peter with Satan.

How do your previous experiences help you to identify the source of something dangerous?

STUMBLING BLOCK: Peter the "rock" now becomes Peter the stumbling block.

Do you have any strength that can become a weakness if you aren't careful?

THINGS OF GOD / THINGS OF MEN: Jesus was acutely aware of the source of something. He knew when something came from God or came from the limits of the world.

What helps you to be able to do the same thing?

COME AFTER ME / FOLLOW ME: The disciples were attracted to Jesus' understanding of God, but were finding things getting more and more difficult all the time to stay with him.

Does scripture study do the same thing to you?

DENY HIMSELF / TAKE UP HIS CROSS: Crosses lined the streets almost every day. It was Rome's way of reminding people who was in charge. A person had to believe in their cause without any reservations in order to challenge the power structures.

Are you facing any crosses in your own effort to live your truth?

FIND HIS LIFE / LOSE HIS LIFE: If you believed that this life was all there was the threat of being killed could effectively deter you from following your truth.

Is there anything in your life that could keep you from following your truth?

WHOLE WORLD: The tempter offered Jesus the whole world if he would just admit that he was the ultimate source of power instead of God.

Where is your ultimate source of power?

FORFEITS / EXCHANGE: When we give up something, it is usually for something we want even more.

Is there anything you would forfeit for your physical life? Is that your ultimate source of power?

SOUL: A person's soul was believed to be their very essence.

What is your essence? Where is your essence?

FATHER'S GLORY: The Father's glory for Jesus was revealed when people came to see how they were loved.

Do you truly believe that your awareness of being loved is the source of God's glory?

Can you remember a time when you gloried in knowing that someone accepted your love?

TRUTH: Truth is a reality that reveals the nature of a thing in its fullness.

What truth does this gospel teaching bring to you?

TASTE DEATH: Jesus promises that his truth will be revealed before all of the disciples died.

Does your awareness of the Resurrection help you to 'taste death' in a new way?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 16:21f// Mk. 8: 31-9:1; Lk. 9:22-27; Hos. 6:2; **Mt. 16:22** // Mt. 17:22f; 20:17f; 13:33; Acts 10:1; **Mt. 16:24**// Lk. 14:27; **Mt. 16:25** // Lk: 17:23; Jn. 12:25; **Mt. 16:27** // Mt. 25:31f; Job 34:11; Ps. 62:13; Jer. 17:10; 2 Tim. 1:7f;
Mt. 16:28 // Mt. 24:30; 26:64;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Jer. 20: 7-9; [Ps. 63: 2-9](#); Rom. 12:1-12; Mt. 16: 21-28.

Revised Common Lectionary: Ex. 3:1-15; [Ps. 105: 1-6, 23-26, 45](#); Rom. 12:9-21; Mt. 16:21-28;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Diamonds do not dazzle with beauty unless they are cut. When cut, the rays of the sun fall on them and make them shine with wonderful colors. So when we are cut by the cross, we shall shine as jewels in the kingdom of God. - Sadhu Sundar Singh

In practice, the monotheistic traditions often elevate Satan to a force independent of God, which technically is heresy and turn them into something more akin to Zoroastrianism, with its concept of the dueling deities of Light and Darkness. Pg. 139.
Grassie, William. The New Sciences of Religion. Zygon. 3/08

If, when caught up in the seductive power of dark desire, we can invoke our empathy and compassion for those who will be harmed by our answering its call, perhaps we may be able to resist its dangerous consequences. Pg. 43

Mickelson, Jane L. The Dark Side of Desire. Parabola, fall 2019

The basic and most fundamental problem in the spiritual life is this acceptance of our hidden and dark self, with which we tend to identify all the evil that is in us. We must learn by discernment to separate the evil growth of our actions from the good ground of the soul. And we must prepare that ground so that a new life can grow up from it within us, beyond our knowledge and beyond our conscious control. The sacred attitude is then one of reverence, awe and silence before the mystery that begins to take place within us when we become aware of our inmost self. In silence, hope, expectation, and unknowing, the man of faith abandons himself to the divine will: not as to an arbitrary and magic power whose decrees must be spelled out from cryptic ciphers, but as to the stream of reality and of life itself.

Thomas Merton. The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation. William H. Shannon, editor. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004: 55.

Sometime in the mid second century we have a document called [Second Clement](#). It was a sermon used by the early church up through the fifth century. It was written to former pagans who had converted to Christianity. In Chapter 6:2 we find: "For what good does it do a person to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

At about the same period in history, Origin attempted a systematic theology called [On First Principles](#). In book three chapter six we find: "Moreover the son of God is said to have died, in virtue of that nature which could certainly admit of death,

while he of whom it is proclaimed that “he shall come in the glory of God the Father with the holy angels” is called the Son of man.”

Ehrman, Bart. *After the New Testament*, NY: Oxford Univ. Press. 1999. Pages 365 and 422.

We are indeed saved by the cross—more than we realize. The people who hold the contradictions—and resolve them in themselves—are the saviors of the world. They are agents of transformation, reconciliation, and newness. Richard Rohr

The mystery of the cross teaches us how to stand against hate without becoming hate, how to oppose evil without becoming evil ourselves. Can you feel yourself stretching in both directions—toward God’s goodness and also toward recognition of your own complicity in evil? If you look at yourself at that moment, you will feel crucified. You hang in between, without resolution, your very life a paradox, held in hope by God (see Romans 8:23-25). Richard Rohr

Our reading today is a sermon from the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan, Philaret, delivered on the feast day of St. John of the Ladder. It gives us a nice overview of St. John’s teaching and his importance to EVERY Christian seeking to live the Christian life according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church. “It is necessary to remember this. People forget that the path of Christianity is indeed an ascetical labor. Last Sunday, we heard how the Lord said: “He that would come after Me, let him take up his cross, deny himself, and follow Me.” The Lord said this with the greatest emphasis. Therefore, the Christian must be one who takes up his cross, and his life, likewise, must be an ascetic labor of bearing that cross. Whatever the outward circumstance of his life, be he monk or layman, it is of no consequence. In either case, if he does not force himself to mount “

From St. John Climacus, “The Ladder of Divine Ascent,” (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1978), pp. xxxi - xxxiii.

Faithful discipleship, according to Jesus, involves “hating” everything that gives us security in exchange for carrying a cross and following him. Christine Pohl

As the sun cannot withhold its light, we cannot withhold what feels real. As the Earth keeps going by turning itself toward the light day after day, we have no choice, despite all forms of etiquette and training, but to keep turning toward what we feel is real. Otherwise, we become cold little planets spinning in the dark.

Nepo, Mark. *The Book of Awakening*, Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. Page 107.

“Discernment” comes from *discernere*, to divide, separate, with a view to distinguish. The idea implies that before we choose or decide, it is appropriate to reflect seriously on why we are making this particular choice. We do this by separating out the diverse motivations (*motiones animae*) moving us and then test or discern which ones are from God. (Mt. 16: 21-23)

Chen, Sr. Sheryl Frances, OSCO. [Taking the Plank Out of Our Own Eye](#). Cistercian Studies Quarterly

The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason. Murder in the Cathedral, Part 1. T.S. Eliot

To lose one's soul is to fall apart. Hence, when I feel my inner world hopelessly crumpling, when I do not know who I am anymore, and when I am trying to rush off in all directions at the same time but do not know where I am going, then I am losing my soul. This, as much as the question of eternity, is what Jesus meant when he asked: "What does it profit a person to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his or her own soul?" A healthy soul, therefore, must do two things for us. First, it must put some fire in our veins, keep us energized, vibrant, living with zest, and full of hope as we sense that life is, ultimately, beautiful and worth living. Whenever this breaks down in us, something is wrong with our souls. When cynicism, despair, bitterness, or depression paralyzes our energy, part of the soul is hurting. Second, a healthy soul has to keep us fixed together. It has to continually give us a sense of who we are, where we came from, where we are going, and what sense there is in all of this. When we stand looking at ourselves, confusedly, in a mirror and ask ourselves what sense, if any, there is to our lives, it is this other part of the soul, our principle of integration, that is limping. Rolheiser, Ronald. *The Holy Longing*. NY. Doubleday. 1999. Pg. 14.

We are susceptible to heretical teachings because, in one form or another, they nurture and reflect the way that we would have it be, rather than the way God has provided, which is infinitely better for us. As they lead us into the blind alleys of self-indulgence and escape from life, heresies pander to the most unworthy tendencies of the human heart. ...

C. FitzSimons Allison (b. 1927),

The Journey

One day you finally knew / what you had to do, and began, / though the voices around you / kept shouting / their bad advice -
- / though the whole house / began to tremble / and you felt the old tug / at your ankles. / "Mend my life!" / each voice cried. /
But you didn't stop. / You knew what you had to do, / though the wind pried / with its stiff fingers / at the very foundations - -

/ though their melancholy / was terrible. It was already late / enough, and a wild night, / and the road full of fallen / branches and stones. / But little by little, / as you left their voices behind, / the stars began to bum / through the sheets of clouds, / and there was a new voice, / which you slowly / recognized as your own, / that kept you company / as you strode deeper and deeper / into the world, / determined to do / the only thing you could do - - - determined / to save / the only life you could save. - Mary Oliver

The Journey

Where are you going i asked / to places i have never been / was the answer / what do you plan to do i asked / my purpose will be evident at journey's end/ who has planned your itinerary i asked / its plan will be revealed at times most unlikely / why would you consent to such a vague plan i said / i accepted the challenge / when i accepted life was the answer. Mary Eleanor Rice

Janice Grana Ed. Images. St. Mary's College Press, Winona MN 1976. Pg. 135.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 167-171. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs.137-141. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2001. Pgs. 133.137. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

[The Call to Live with Christ like integrity](#)