

Bible reading Matthew 16:21-28

The cost and reward of following Jesus

Having acknowledged the truth of Peter's declaration, Jesus tells his friends what kind of king he will be: one that suffers. And he tells them that they too will suffer if they come after him; it is the only way to find the life they seek.



Bible notes



What a contrast! After Peter's proclamation 'You are the Christ' (last week's reading, Matthew 16:13-20), in this week's passage, Peter is confronted with the consequences of Jesus' identity. This introduces a new section of the Gospel: Jesus journeys towards Jerusalem to face the coming crisis. Matthew suggests that Peter does not 'hear' the promise of resurrection but only the prophecy of Jesus' death, rejecting this strongly. He tries to control Jesus and change an unacceptable future. Jesus' rebuke is even stronger than in Mark's Gospel (Mark 8:33), with three elements. He identifies Peter as Satan, who tests people to destruction (Job 1-2). He calls him a 'stumbling-block', hindering Jesus' purposes. And in contrast to the affirmation of the preceding verses, he tells Peter that he is not in touch with God's will. Peter must have been devastated, and his voice is silenced. Jesus' disciples could guess what kind of death awaited him. The cross was the means of execution for non-citizen inhabitants of the Roman Empire when they became rebellious. Perhaps they would have been even more disturbed by his requirement that his followers share in taking up the cross. To do this is to turn away from the power-games of elite leadership and the pursuit of profit. Instead, Jesus' followers must recognise that the world is God's, and that the only way to gain it is to share in God's purposes, resisting exploitation and living generously. It is unclear what Jesus intends in speaking of the return of the Son of Man. It may refer to the resurrection, his transfiguration (which follows immediately), the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, or the second coming. Or he may speak metaphorically, encouraging them to remain watchful for his coming.

WATCH



Enjoy this clip from Disney's *Frozen*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y132kgTIm2A>

Think about how Anna was prepared to sacrifice her life to save her sister. Jesus says 'those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.' What sacrifices might you have to make to follow Jesus?

First impressions

- What have you done that was scary but rewarding?
- What, for you, are the rewards of following Jesus?
- And the costs?



CREATE

Make chalk crosses. Tape a paper cross-shape onto a sheet of dark paper. With coloured chalk, draw all over the page. Remove the cross shape and discover a bright cross silhouette.

Pray 

Father God,
When things are tough:
help us to walk with you.
When life is good:
help us to walk with you.
On the good days, the bad days and the average days:
help us to walk with you. Amen.

REFLECT

We see the ups and downs of Peter's life. Earlier Peter recognised Jesus as Messiah. Now, after Jesus' stinging rebuke, Peter falls silent, and next Peter will go up the mountain with Jesus to witness the Transfiguration.

We are like Peter: Sometimes we get it right, sometimes we fall flat on our faces. Reflect on your ups and downs and how God forgives and offers us the opportunity to continue the adventure of Christian faith.

WALK 

Make a cross out of materials you have around your home, the size is up to you: large or pocket-sized. Go for a walk carrying your cross, thinking about how your decision to Jesus will involve sacrifice. Does the cross affect how you walk? Talk to Jesus as you walk.