

## In Nomine Iesu

### *Invocavit, the First Sunday in Lent 2023*

#### **A Savior who will not turn back – Matthew 16:21-23**

“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You.’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”

Grace be to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who saves us in every temptation. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

Peter was not foolish, at least no more than anyone else. He thought he was doing the right thing, as we all think most of the time. He thought he understood what the Holy Scriptures taught. Based on his understanding he took Jesus aside and began to set Him straight on the will of God concerning Israel’s King. It did not occur to him that not everything is as it appears to be in this fallen world. Not everything we’re sure we **know is true, really is true**. What is more, there is an evil one who is very interested to help us find and multiply doubt and confusion, very willing to further any misunderstandings of God’s word that we have.

#### I

The devil is that evil one. He is a liar. He tells you that you can have more than one God. But it’s not true. He tells you whatever you imagine God to be is fine so long as you call Him by the familiar names found in the Bible. But that’s not true either. The truth is that you either follow the God of Abraham or the one who wants to be called God, but is not. There are no other choices. The devil claims Satanists as his own; and they are. But he doesn’t want you to know that he gets all the undecideds too. He gets all who worship no god, and all who worship false gods. He gets all who, like Peter, would obstruct Jesus on His way to the cross, suffering, and death.

The devil’s offer, made through Peter, to spare Jesus the way of suffering was only so that mankind would be without Jesus’ death and resurrection. Satan encouraged Jesus to live so that we might die. He says: “You shouldn’t have to do this, even as You shouldn’t have had to suffer 40 days of temptation after Your baptism. None of this is your fault. When Israel wandered in the wilderness, they complained and grumbled. When given a land flowing with milk and honey, they stained it with sin and evil. When they were given the ark of the covenant with Your presence, Your priesthood, the rites of Your temple, they defiled them with idolatry, foolishness, and neglect. You should not have to continue this hard, merciless path to Jerusalem and bitter death for their sake.

But Jesus did what Adam, Moses, Israel, you and I have not. He resisted. He was tempted, but not overcome. He did not sin. He suffered obediently, in place of their disobedience and ours. He lived righteously before the Father, without falling into misbelief and sin, knowing that the Father’s will is always good, always right, even when it does not seem like it could be. Even now in the face of betrayal, suffering, and death, which He told His disciples awaited Him in Jerusalem, the obedient Son

waits on the Father. He will not allow the crushing burden of mankind's guilt to be taken from His shoulders. Instead He goes silently, willingly, trustingly, as a Lamb to the slaughter. He goes without complaint, without honor, without friend, without help or comfort. There will be no grace for Him in Jerusalem. He will find no mercy there. He will find only justice and judgment awaiting Him, judgment for the sins of all those whose sin He bears, refusing to lay them down.

There in Jerusalem the Christ will allow the chief priests and elders, the very ones charged by God to teach truth to Israel, to judge Him guilty of the sins of Israel, and not just those of Israel, but of all the families of the earth, that the promise God once gave to Abraham might be fulfilled. He goes alone to pay for sins He did not commit. He lets the leaders of His people deliver Him to the judgment of Rome, a people who do not know Him, whom He lets force a mocking crown of thorns onto His brow, drive nails into His hands and feet, as the devil choreographs the whole hideous scene, venting his hatred and frustration on the Lamb of God who would not quit, would not turn away from this path to Jerusalem and the lonely, bitter death that awaited Him there. **This is what Peter tried to stop.**

But the Savior does not turn away. The sacrifice will be completed. Jesus will love the Father to the end, and the world too, even as His Father did in sending Him into the world. There will be no more to do. It is finished. He has satisfied the demands of the Father's law, removing guilt and shame from the children of Adam, Jew and Gentile alike. He has become the One in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. From there He descends into hell, fully taking up His power, a power hell cannot hold. He rises from death. From His victory over Satan in the desert, to the trials and temptations He endured in His earthly ministry, including that of poor, deceived Peter, He is the Victor. His is the power over sin, death, and hell. And so, He ascends to the right hand of God to rule over all things, putting all His and our enemies under His feet. **This is what Peter tried to stop from happening.**

## II

Jesus' power to rule is not like the power of men, which is the power of the sword. Of course, mankind doesn't think of its power that way. But let's not be naive. The President of the United States' power rests upon the strength of the armed forces, the FBI, CIA, IRS and all the rest of the alphabet. This is true of all governments in this world. Presidents rule, as all presidents have, by threat and coercion. Break his laws, refuse to pay his taxes, and see if this is not true. Yet, it is also necessary. If the president really were a man of peace he would be toppled in an instant and the nation threatened. And do not think this is criticism of this or any president. King David was also such a man, a man of coercion and threat. A president or king rules in the kingdom of God's left hand, the kingdom of power and the sword, **where chaos and evil always threaten law and order**. He rules in a fallen world, and his only power is force. Here is the point, a king or a president is a man of coercion and threat, but the Lord Jesus Christ is not. He is the Prince of Peace, even though His kingdom suffers violence, as He said.

The power of Jesus Christ doesn't threaten. He makes no empty promises as rulers of this world do. He puts no one in prison, levies no taxes, commands no army or police force. Yet His is the greatest power on earth, against which no other power is worthy of comparison. His power is forgiveness. Grace and mercy are His tools.

He freely gives **to all** what He received **from none** in Jerusalem, creates citizens of His Kingdom by making His enemies friends, declaring them to be His brothers, dear children of His Father in heaven. He washes them in the water of baptism, and so exchanges their uncleanness for His pure righteousness. In Him they, who were dead in trespasses and sins, are made alive. In Him they are raised to newness of life. **This is what Peter tried to stop.**

But because Peter's misguided advice did not sway our Lord Jesus Christ, you are now the beloved of the Father. Your sins are forgiven. You will not be lost forever. Yes, you will have to live out your days in the same fallen, deceptive world Peter struggled to understand. Here you will know sorrow, weakness, doubt, and shame, as Peter and all Christ's disciples have known. You will be attacked by the devil. And you may ask, why? Why must I endure temptation and sorrow? Why must I too suffer assaults of the devil? Why? Because a student is not above his Teacher, as Jesus Himself said. Because you too must take up your cross and follow Him.

But know this, God hides His faithful ones in weakness. He conceals His saints in the bodies of sinners. You are holy, righteous, innocent, and without blame in the sight of God. You need have no fear of death and the Judgment Day that comes for all. But still, you have not fully arrived at the goal God has set for you. The good work begun in you by God the Holy Spirit is not complete. You are not home yet. You still must suffer in this barren place of sin and temptation, full of sorrow and death. The devil would feed you with the bread of temptation, as he once tried to do with Jesus in the wilderness, and Peter in the company of His Savior. But your Father in heaven feeds you with the bread His Son calls His body and the wine He calls His blood, given to you for the forgiveness of sins. He strengthens you with the hearing of His word and, so, makes you wise, just as Peter too would grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and became truly wise.

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The world is corrupt and fallen, a place where not everything is what it appears to be, as Peter learned to his bitter shame. But our Lord was patient and faithful with Peter, forgiving and merciful. So too is He with us. Surely there was a time in your life when you fought God, when you wanted to have things your way and not His. There was a time when you thought the wisdom of God, whether given to you by a parent, a pastor, a spouse, or a friend, was foolishness, and you presumed to take God to task, assuming your wisdom was greater than His. There might even have been a time when you, like Peter, denied the necessity of Christ's suffering and dying for you, or that you had something to add for your salvation. The devil will play such games with your heart and mind. He will try to exploit the weakness of your flesh, the fears that haunt your heart, the doubts that enter your mind, as he did with Peter. But as Peter came back ashamed and guilty only to find forgiveness so will you find forgiveness with Him who could not be turned from Jerusalem, but insisted on suffering and dying, that you might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, blessedness. He, dear friends, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**