

Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 14th Sunday After Pentecost - August 30, 2026

00:00

Glad you're here.

00:04

I wonder if we always appreciate how subversive it is that we do this thing.

00:13

And by that I mean that

00:30

We live in a world where it's all about flexing muscle and dominating, and our gospel calls us to service instead.

00:41

That is very much the conflict we'll hear about as we eavesdrop on the argument that Jesus and Simon Peter have.

00:50

So think on that just a bit as we go through the service today.

00:55

A word of thanks to Bob for getting our microphone reconnected and reconfigured.

01:01

I trust it will work through the whole service today.

01:05

Also it's true that when Bob is here the microphone does behave, but when Bob needs to be away

01:10

the microphone thinks I can just do what I want.

01:12

So I think we're doubly cared for today.

01:16

So thank you, Bob.

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 16th chapter. From that time on, after

00:09

Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus began to show his

00:15

disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands

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of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed

02:21

at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes

02:25

and be killed and on the third day raised.

02:31

Now Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him,

02:36

saying, God forbid it, Lord.

02:39

This must never happen to you.

02:42

And Jesus turned to Peter.

02:45

"Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things."

02:57

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me.

03:09

For those who want to save their life will lose it.

03:13

And those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

03:18

For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world

03:22

but forfeit their life?

03:24

Or what will they give in return for their life?

03:29

For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in glory,

03:34

the glory of his father.

03:36

And then he will repay everyone for what has been done.

03:40

Truly, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death

03:46

before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

03:51

The Gospel of our Lord.

03:56

Won't you be seated.

The Sermon

04:07

"Grace to you and peace."

04:15

Maybe it's one thing to say Jesus is the Messiah, but when the job description is spelled out

04:25

demonstrated, most of us just aren't having it.

04:32

Simon Peter isn't, and we've been there before. I don't know if the people who

04:43

translated the Bible into English were feeling squeamish about this particular

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passage, but the words that were used suggest two things. The grabbing of

04:53

lapels and shouting and getting into each other's face because that's really what happened.

05:04

It's helpful I think to look at this really disturbing text through the lenses of yes

05:13

and no.

05:16

That there are things that we say no to because we know that yes is greater and grander and

05:22

And that's where we're going, striving to keep the main thing the main thing, as they used to say.

05:34

We also have things we say yes and no to.

05:41

We know that if there are certain things that we aspire to in life, there are trade-offs.

05:50

If I really wanted a beach body, I'd lay off the donuts.

05:55

But I really prefer the donuts.

06:01

But there's a lot more at stake here than beach bodies.

06:07

For one thing, life.

06:10

And the way that Matthew uses the word, and there were lots of words for life, everything

06:16

from our biological life to this kind of life,

06:19

which is the stuff that makes us who we are life.

06:29

We are running a risk of losing that sense of self,

06:34

Jesus says, if we follow the agenda that Simon Peter

06:39

would have liked us to follow.

06:43

There come times for the sake of that self that we say no.

06:52

There's more at stake.

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We'll talk about that.

06:57

But thinking about the ways we say no,

07:00

we can go back to our baptism liturgy.

07:05

You know the part just before we get to the confession,

07:07

the things we affirm that we believe in?

07:11

We say no three times to things like the forces of evil

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that would draw us from God.

07:19

Or if I can use the Green Book version, which in some ways

07:23

I really liked, do you reject the devil and all

07:28

his empty promises?

07:32

Now, I will tell you that it's the second part of that

07:35

that I get more than the first.

07:38

I tend not to believe in a devil that is a personage with the red suit and the pitchfork

07:43

and all of that, but I do believe it is very, very life and death real, that there is some

07:54

devilish force that would cause us to abandon our trust in God.

08:04

Maybe because it is such an overwhelming thing we decided to in the 13th century give it a personage.

08:12

Okay that was more than I meant to say.

08:14

Let me get to the part that I really wanted to say which was empty promises.

08:24

We're not having it if at our baptism we renounce things.

08:31

what are those empty promises? Back to yes and no. And here it's important to lay

08:38

down a few extra tracks of Jesus life story. Do you remember when he's in the

08:46

wilderness, he's at his most vulnerable? He's starving. He's in a place that is

08:52

considered not only physically but spiritually dangerous. The tempter, however

08:59

you like to name the tempter shows up and says now any self-respecting Messiah

09:08

is going to flex is going to use power to one's own advantage and that one is

09:18

going to use power to prove oneself that one is going to try to get more power

09:28

by pledging allegiance to the power broker.

09:40

To all of these things Jesus says no. And not because he's in a bad mood,

09:47

but because he gets

09:49

yes, his very first

09:53

public pronouncing and teaching. You know them as the Beatitudes.

09:57

Blessed are the poor. God blesses them. God blesses people in mourning. God blesses

10:04

those who are heartbroken over the brokenness of the world who yearn and

10:08

desire for Shalom and righteousness, which is living in right relationship

10:16

with one another and with creation.

10:22

That's the "yes" that Jesus emphasizes. The dust up he and Simon Peter have is

10:32

another version of that. Simon Peter was hoping for Messiah, maybe like those good

10:40

old Maccabean brothers back in the day, you remember those guys who did the armed

10:45

revolt that worked for a while until it didn't work? Thinking that maybe Jesus

10:51

would stage violent deposing of Caesar. And when Jesus outlines his mission that

11:02

he will have to suffer, we are getting a glimpse into the know of humanity. That

11:12

what Jesus puts on offer is rejected in the most violent of terms. The most

11:18

unequivocal know that humanity can dish out. And what is God's rebuttal on the

11:29

third day? An adamant unequivocal yes. A yes to life. A yes to resurrection.

11:46

So our yeses become yes, and sometimes that does mean saying no along the way, now and again.

11:57

The stakes, as I hinted at earlier, or maybe tried to make explicit,

12:05

that when we misplace our allegiance, when we think we are about power in some way,

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were privileged in some way, we've lost ourselves. But by paying attention to the

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stuff that Jesus says yes to, that's where we find ourselves and we find our

12:28

life. But I saved the biggest stakes of all for last.

12:40

The stakes that Jesus plays for and that the followers play for is the restoration of all

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things, the healing of relationships so that we may have, as one of my favorite writers

12:58

puts it, friendship with God, friendship with each other, friendship with all of creation,

13:07

and kinship even with the very cosmos.

13:19

Yes to that.

13:22

Amen.