

CROSS PURPOSES**Matthew 16:21-28****(Read Matthew 16:21-28)**

Intro: Kathy absolutely must have the garage door closed once we have arrived home and have the car safely parked. She also is very intent on making sure it is closed when we are leaving – we may not drive down the street unless we know the door is closed, or at least closing. Her reason for being so obsessive is very legitimate, besides the obvious security issue, there is also the issue of unwanted critters like raccoons, skunks and feral cats that are in profusion around our house, getting into the garage and making mischief.

But there have been times when, as I leave, she, having just bid me goodbye from the top of the steps into the house from the garage, hits the garage door closer button on the wall at precisely the same time I hit mine in the truck. We are at cross-purposes as the door bounces up and down until we figure out what is going on.

I have a fun game that I picked up from a friend that helps leaders know what it's like to be working together as opposed to against one another. I could go into detail, but to keep it short: There are teams of six or eight people who are given instructions to build something using Legos. The problem is, everyone is given a different set of instructions. As I hand the instructions out I imply that the instructions each person has are very clear (which they are) and everyone is to follow them to the smallest detail. I then set them to work, competing with the other teams in the room to see who gets their project completed first.

It's hilarious to see how the teams set to work, worrying about how they want to beat the other teams, all the while completely ignorant of how they are competing against their own teammates because they have conflicting instructions. One will be saying this piece is to be the cornerstone while another is saying to use a different piece. Chaos quickly sets in as teammates struggle against one another with competing agendas. They are truly at cross-purposes.

Jesus was at cross-purposes with just about everyone here in Matthew 16. At the opening of the chapter, he is confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees for their attempts to trap him into compromising himself. He called them a wicked and adulterous generation and they were.

Following that discussion with the religious leaders, the disciples, with Peter as their mouthpiece, affirmed Jesus as the Messiah. But, then, in the text I just read, they had no idea what the Messiah had come to do for humanity. So when Jesus revealed next that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and then be killed – they were having none of it. They too, were at cross-purposes.

But Jesus was at cross-purposes too. His purpose was to come and die on a cross. It was his mission which he willingly accepted and was determined to carry out. And he added to that, the fact that his followers, his disciples, those he was specifically teaching here AND us, must also have the same purpose – to take up their own cross and follow him. So there is enough cross-purposes to go around.

In fact . . .

It's a MUST

- G. Campbell Morgan points out there is a value in the MUST. He ties in how the word must, referring to how Jesus said that he **must** go to Jerusalem is the idea all through verse 21. Here is how that reads, *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 on the third day be raised.* Matthew 16:21. Morgan renders it this way: “And he began by saying the Son of Man must go unto Jerusalem. The emphasis of that “*must*” continues throughout the statement. He *must* suffer many things and *must* be killed and *must* be raised again the third day. . . I am compelled to go to Jerusalem, I must suffer, I must be killed. It was heroism, if we look only at it from the low level of human standpoint. Why must he? His disciples would not have made him suffer. The religious leaders would not have killed him if he would have accommodated their ideals. But Jesus could not lower his sights. It was as though Jesus said, I cannot lower my standard. I must go and do what I came to do. Jesus didn't change his tune to fit the popular narrative. He went to the Cross because it was a **must**.
- David Guzik makes a similar point about the must. The suffering and death of Jesus was a must because of two great facts: man's sin and God's love. While His death was the ultimate example of man's sin against God, it was also the supreme expression of God's love to man. “The ‘must’ of Jesus’ suffering lies, not in unqualified determinism, nor in heroic determination (though some of both is present), but in

willing submission to his Father's will." Jesus's trip to the Cross was a must that was far more than heroics, it was the most supreme act of love.

- Speaking of love . . .

You can love Jesus and be very wrong

- Peter and the other disciples were horrified to hear Jesus predicting he would be killed. That was NOT the plan! Certainly it was not THEIR plan. How could the Messiah, the Son of Man, be at the mercy of mere human beings? After hundreds of years of longing for the arrival of the Messiah who would deliver God's people, who had arrived on their watch and was their beloved rabbi; for the disciples, the idea of a suffering Messiah, of a Messiah put to death, was a scandal.
- Now, let's be fair to Peter. Such language really is scandalous for people who are intentionally or unintentionally at cross-purposes with God. This is why Jesus is such a scandal for Muslims and for Jews. For Jews, the Messiah certainly could not suffer. And for Muslims, Jesus cannot be accepted as God or the Son of God, because it is blasphemy to think that God could suffer at the hands of humankind.
- But the thoughts of God are not our thoughts. His plan is better and he knew what he was doing.
- Peter, always the one to speak first and loudest, showed that he couldn't fathom such talk and wasn't going to allow it to go on – so he took Jesus aside and rebuked him. That's strong language. But he was doing it out of love. And self-preservation, and self-interest. But mostly love.
- It may have been love, but Jesus tells him he is a stumbling block and even calls him Satan. Peter is a perfect example of how a sincere heart coupled with man's thinking can often lead to disaster. Jesus must suffer many things and die AND rise from the dead and who are we to question what God is up to? Someone had to die for the sin of humanity once and for all and Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One was to one who must do it. Yes, no matter how gross or unnecessary it seems to sanitized humanity, who say "God didn't have to do it that way" it is still what God required." You can be all about love and still be wrong.
- G. Campbell Morgan writes, "The man who loves Jesus, but who shuns God's method, is a stumbling block to him." You can be all about love in a lot of things, but if it goes against the holiness of God, than it's still wrong. This is why people are not lying when they say they love Jesus and espouse what the Bible calls abomination. So don't judge them harshly, just realize they are stumbling blocks to the kingdom. And get on with your own must. Yes . . .

To follow Jesus requires a MUST for us – lose your life and find life

- After putting Peter in his place – which was behind him – which is where all of us must be . . . Jesus gave his disciples the mission: We too, must be at cross purposes – our purpose must to be to take up our own cross. The way of the disciple must be the way of the master. Warren Wiersbe wrote, "Denying self is not the same as self-denial. We practice self-denial when, for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities. But we deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determine to obey His will." Guzik adds "Denying self means to live as an others-centered person. Jesus was the only person to do this perfectly, but we are to follow in His steps. This is following Jesus at its simplest: He carried a cross, He walked down death row; so must those who follow Him."
- That means that when I say "Be Jesus" we need to be ready to really BE JESUS. Have you thought about that? Are you ready for that? F. B. Meyer writes, "Self-pleasing ends in destruction. Self-denial and self-sacrifice are the Divine path to life. Let us be more eager to lose ourselves than to find ourselves; more said on the cross than on glory; more eager to promote the well-being of others than our own."
- The paradox of the cross is finding life by losing it. Are you at cross-purposes, or is your purpose the cross. Taking up a cross is to do what Christ has appointed for us to do. That is what following Jesus is. It is the must of our life too.

Conclusion: I have a sign on my wall that reads, "Dyslexics of the world UNTIE!" It is a play on Karl Marx's famous quote from his book THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO where he proclaims "WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS". It's interesting that by simply switching two letters, the word "Unite" becomes "Untie" which in many ways means exactly the opposite. The two words are quite literally at cross-purposes.

Similarly the two words cross and purposes used together can have two different meanings. We can be, as Peter and the other disciples were, at cross-purposes with Jesus's mission to suffer many things and die on a cruel Roman execution device called the cross. Or we can be like Jesus to have the cross as our purpose for the fulfillment of the will of God and the advancement of the Kingdom.

So, every one of us are at cross-purposes in one way or another. Which purpose is yours? Amen.