Date written: September 13, 1945

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-26

Text: Matthew 16:26

Theme: How is your soul?

Proposition: "How is your soul" is an important question to every human being.

Sources: abingdon Bible Comm., p. 980-981
L. B. Williams, Master Book of Humorous Illustrations, No. 494.
Pulpit Digest, Sept. 1945 p. 76
King James Bible, A.V.

Places preached:

Independence - 9-23-45
Rocky oak - 10-28-45
Salem 7-24-46
Huntington, Ark. 4/18/48

Scripture: Matthew 16:21-26

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Text: Matthew 16:26

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Introduction:

1. This is the first definite intimation Jesus makes to his disciples that he will seem to be a Victim rather than a Victor -- or if a Victor, then only in a quite unusual sense.

2. He had, indeed, told them before that discipleship would be a costly thing (Mt. 10:9f.), and they had already seen him rejected in his own village (13:53-58), but his mighty works and his affirmations about his kingdom had kept alive their hopes of worldly power. The recent confession of Peter and its approval by Jesus (Mt.16:16,17) must have greatly strengthened those hopes. Perhaps he realized that fact and desired to set them right.

3. More likely, however, he felt that the confession provided an appropriate background for announcing what he himself had long known to be the truth -- that he was, indeed, the Christ, but the Suffering Christ (Isa.53).

4. In any case, from this time Jesus never lets the disciples lose sight of the fact that he is to suffer a violent death(mt. 17:9,12,22,23,etc.). One who until now has been to them a teacher and wonder-worker endeavors from henceforth to have them see in him a Redeemer -- one who must suffer to save.

5. The solemn words of verses 24-26 properly follow on Jesus' announcement of his Passion. The paradox of his own life must be the paradox of the life of his followers.

6. Self-discovery through self-surrender -- this was the law he laid upon them because he had himself learned its everlasting validity. It is not impossible to live selfishly -- but what an impossible life it is. To give up life is only to lose a lower and find a higher.

7. If men were content to accept things as they are, all progress would cease, of all kinds. Men are seeking a higher way of life. Many are the mistakes made in seeking it.

a. Some seek through acquisition of wealth.

b. Some seek through power.

c. Some seek through identification of self with a higher-than-man power.

8. Jesus in this passage points out that the highest way, self-discovery at its best, is in the well-being of the soul.

9. We want to look at this verse, then, to see if the condition of the soul is of worth to a person. "How is your soul," is the question, and the burden of proof is to show that it is an important question to every human being.

I. Definition of the word "soul."

1. The dictionary definition breaks down into the following meanings or ideas as to the soul:

a. The essence, or substance, or material that makes up life.

b. The animating principle, or actuating cause of life.

c. That something peculiar to the individual which is manifested in thinking, willing and knowing.

d. The immortal aspect of man, as held by most religions.

2. How the idea of the soul differs from the idea of the heart.

a. In a previous sermon, (written Sept. 10, 1945, on Psalm 19), the heart was defined as the organ in which reside the forces of affections and attitudes.

b. This definition corresponds, to, is about the same as, that part of the preceding definition of the soul that refers to the soul as the animating principle or actuating cause of life; the heart and soul both seem to be the place from which comes the individual's peculiar products of thought, will and knowledge.

c. Perhaps the soul and the heart are the same; man cannot know. But for the sake of thinking more easily about himself, with the view of helping himself to a higher way of life, it is wise to distinguish between the two.

d. The soul might be defined, then, as the sum total of all that a person is in mind, spirit, or heart, which is the immortal aspect of the individual.

e. This definition makes the soul peculiar as possessing immortal life. Here there will be no attempt to prove that there is immortality, for the very use of the word "soul," by this definition, presumes that there is immortality for the individual. If there is no belief in immortality, there is no soul.

(1) This idea of the soul as the aspect of man that lives on after the death of the physical body is the one most common to all of the world's great religions.

f. The soul, again, is the immortal aspect of a person. Thus it is all that a person is that lives on after physical death. It is bound, then, to include personal characteristics of the individual while on earth. If this is so, then it is important that the soul have desirable characteristics, for these may determine to a large extent the soul's place after death.

II. What the question "How is your soul" means.

1. Do you enjoy living?

a. If you do not enjoy living now, it is not likely that you will want to keep on living after this life, if the after-life is anywhere like this one.

b. If you do not enjoy living now, then, if you wish for immortality, you probably think of it as something which is entirely strange to you, something about which you know nothing.

c. But if you do enjoy living now, you don't want to give up this life. The fact that you will have to die makes it attractive and natural to hope that after-life will be similar to the happiness known in this life.

Master Book Humor. Ill. no.494

Ill. A man dreamed that he went to Heaven and was shown around by a heavenly guide. He saw the Tree of Life with twelve kinds of fruit, the golden streets, beautiful landscapes everywhere, a lovely stream, and by it growing a great tree, to which, much to the dreamer's surprise, a man was chained by his feet.

"What does this mean?" the dreamer asked the heavenly guide.

"O," said the guide, "he's from Boston, and he wants to go back."

c. Those who do not believe in immortality, or are uncertain of it, often take the attitude expressed by the old saying "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die." These would say they do enjoy living, but their answer is a false one, if the results of their type of living be compared with the results of those who believe in immortality and are trying to prepare for it through righteousness.

Ill. Heaven and hell demonstrated by the difference in forks.

Sermons New Testament Matthew 16:21-26 7

Pulpit Digest Sept. 1945, p.76

2. Do you fear death?

Illustration: The famous missionary, Hudson Taylor, set out for his China field in a sailing vessel that drifted, one day, periously close to a cannibal island. Already the savages on shore were celebrating the expected feast.

The crew and the captain were fearful and desperate, as the viewed almost certain death. Only Mr. Taylor seemed to remain calm.

"If you ever prayed to your God pray to Him now for a breath of wind," the captain challenged the missionary.

"I will, provided you set your sails to catch the breeze," Taylor replied.

"And make myself a laughing stock?" the captain answered.

But as the dead calm remained unbroken the frantic captain unfurled the white sails.

An hour later there was a knock at Taylor's stateroom door.

"Who is there?"

"You still praying for wind?" the captain questioned.

"Yes."

"Well, you'd better stop praying. We have more, sir, than we can manage!"

a. If you fear death with the type of fear that the captain and crew did, then it is not well with your soul.

b. If you can meet the prospect of death unflinchingly and calmly, having trust that that this life will continue, and doing what you can to keep it, but trusting that if death comes, all is well, then it is well with your soul.

Sermons New Testament Matthew 16:21-26 8

III. The question "how is your soul" concerns all that a person knows.

1. It concerns the affairs of this life, whether they are enjoyed or not.

2. It concerns death.

Conclusion: "How is your soul" is an important question to every human being.