



August 30, 2026 | *Course Alterations* | Pastor Eddie Eddy

Matthew 16:21-28

New International Version

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. ²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" ²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." ²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. ²⁸ "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

L: This is the word of God for the people of God P: Thanks be to God.

Course Alterations

I remember when I was going through the process to figure out just what the heck it was that God was calling **me** to do for this thing we call church. Some of you may know that it was a hunting trip to Africa that set this whole life altering experience for me in motion. I went to the third poorest country in the world with no...and I mean **zero** expectations of having a personal encounter with God that would send me down a completely different path in life.

But that is what happened. I witnessed things that I had never seen before. I saw people working together to raise the children of the village. I saw how God was building his church in a land of voodoo worship and non-Christian cultures. I saw how relationships are more important than material treasures that sit in storage somewhere and have no impact on how we treat each other. I also saw that the way I was taught to exist with others and what was important... had a lot of room for improvement.

When I got home from that trip which included a few course alterations in our travel itinerary which included a stop in Niamey Niger, I was aware that my path was being guided in a different direction.

Jeanie and I made some decisions, and she encouraged me to talk with our new pastor, and the next thing I knew...I was on a rollercoaster ride that almost made me totally lose my sense of direction.

A lot happened during that twisty turny ride. I lost my job, the housing market crashed, and we were trying to sell a unique piece of property, we had a devastating blowout in the family which left my two brothers and I with no hope of ever reconciling with our parents.

Our oldest son needed money for paramedic school, and I had almost no income. Jeanie picked up as much hair business as she could handle, and we limped through this journey just surviving day by day. We stayed faithful, we tithe on the little we were bringing in. Yet God always provided for us as we journeyed through some unfamiliar terrain.

With all that going on...with me looking for any kind of work I could find, I started the ministry inquiry process. To be honest...it was spiritually and mentally exhausting. One day while I met with my pastor to go over the work I was supposed to be doing but hadn't done...she slammed the book closed in front of me and very sternly asked me..."Are you going to do this or what?"

To be honest...I was a bit hurt. And that hurt led to anger. Look at all I was going through...and she was going to yell at me. I was one of the most dedicated members of that church. I was there all the time. I still maintained the 8 acres of soccer fields with no income, and I never turned in a bill for anything.

How could she talk to me like that? Who did she think she was and who did she think she was talking to?

PAUSE

Here is what I have learned through the years...Jesus often presents his followers new paths to follow and new ways to look at themselves, people, and the world around them...and sometimes those presentations...sting a bit. Truth is though...It was then...and is still... important to take Jesus at his word...following and doing as he says while we travel through sometimes unfamiliar terrain in life.

PAUSE

To better understand our text today, it might be helpful if we slip back to some passages leading up to today's. If you remember...Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" After several answers were given, including "John the Baptist," and "Elijah" Jesus asked a follow-up question... "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

Short Pause

It makes me wonder if Peter realized the implications of his statement. We will always have the advantage of knowing what "being the Son of the living God" means after the cross. Peter had no clue. It's hard to imagine that Peter comprehended the immensity of what he had just said about Jesus. One of the common assumptions is that when Peter made this statement...he had in mind a warrior-king like David. A king who would defeat the Romans and make Israel a free nation again. A king who would drive the evil tyrants from this beloved land.

While that may have been the hope of Peter...Jesus was not the "return evil for evil" type of battle lord the people hoped for.

Yet Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!", you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven"⁴

It's unlikely that Peter understood the magnitude of what Jesus had just said to him. While Peter was probably imagining a warrior-king, Jesus was altering the course of Peter's perceived direction. Jesus was leading his followers to a new and superior reality that did not depend on violence and force. Instead, it relied on forgiveness and sacrifice and mercy and love. And if we look for it...We can see Jesus' description of that in our text for today.

Pause

Our passage for today says, "From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Then it says that Peter took Jesus aside and reprimanded him, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!"

I think we can understand where Peter is coming from. He's a faithful follower...a dedicated servant. He only wants the best for his leader and for his people. Matthew describes Peter's comments as a "rebuke." I can see that. What would you say if someone you loved who was in perfectly good health, told you, "I am planning to suffer and die"?

There is no doubt that Peter's rebuke was provoked by love for his master. A master that was supposed to lead an armed revolt to free his nation. How could Jesus endure suffering and death and still become the victorious king that would overthrow the cruel Romans?

But Jesus responded sternly, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

SHORT PAUSE

Can you imagine how Peter must have let in that moment? Peter must have been reeling. Jesus had just praised Peter for his correct answer about who he believed that Jesus is...that Jesus is indeed, the Messiah. Jesus then placed the future of the church on Peter's shoulders and said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." But now, now Jesus calls Peter Satan and describes him as a stumbling block! Can you imagine how painful that must have been? I know I can.

Here is a fun fact for you...Nowhere else in scripture does Jesus address anyone other than Satan himself by that name. But the truth is...without even realizing it in the moment...Peter was either speaking for...or was being used by...Satan.

For Jesus...Peter had just tried to put a roadblock in God's plan. Peter was getting in the way of the mission God had sent Jesus to do. Peter was acting like Satan when Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness for 40 days after his baptism.

For my pastor who called me out when I wasn't doing my part faithfully to become a pastor myself...I became a stumbling block...for her and me. She was following God's plan and she was leading me toward God's plan...and I was letting all the things the world was throwing at me...to get me off course. I needed a course alteration, and she gave me one. And it was uncomfortable at first.

PAUSE

Let me ask you...did Jesus suddenly stop loving Peter? Absolutely Not. Did he no longer want him as a disciple? Again...No. But we can also understand that Jesus saw the potential that Peter had to veer off the chosen path... so his direct and uncomfortable response...was course alteration for Peter.

If Peter was going to be both a leader among the disciples and the **rock**...the foundation upon which Jesus would establish his church, then Peter needed to understand that his attitude could become a stumbling block along the path to the cross.

PAUSE

The good news is that...rather than pushing Peter away and picking a different disciple, the course alteration Jesus offered to Peter would eventually pull him even closer to Jesus and his role in the church.

Jesus' message that day, of course, was directed at all his disciples, not just Peter, or James, or John...not just Pastor Eddie, or the Methodist...or Forrester/Leaf River UMC...but all who follow Jesus.

Even today, it's not hard to see why Peter in particular, and people in general, take offense at Jesus' words. They are hard words to hear.

PAUSE

Friends...I would assume that many of us, at one time or another, were pretty sure that the plans we had/have for our jobs, our family, our community...our church would work out great...as we see things. Peter needed a reminder that we are called to die to our way of thinking and live for what God wants for the church. The hard words delivered altered Peter's ego.

How is Jesus altering our course today? Where do we feel the need to change directions?

Sometimes that may be in the form of a gentle nudge from a trusted friend. Sometimes that may be a hard word spoken to us through God's word, or through a Christian leader, or through an unexpected circumstance...a lot of times through the mouths of babes because they are the ones who are pure at heart.

So... if...or more than likely **when** we get that nudge...we can look to Peter and the change in attitude that Jesus directly...yet lovingly offered him for comfort. Through this story, we can see that even when we get a bit too overzealous in our position, or our opinion, or our self-assumed authority...we can know that Jesus still stuck with Peter...and Peter ultimately stuck with Jesus in working God's plan.

PAUSE

It's hard to imagine that these powerful words of faith helped change the path of the one who heard Jesus say, "Get behind me, Satan." But that's what can happen when we are open to Jesus' loving course alterations in our lives. When the storms of life are trying to blow us off course... Jesus can redirect us to keep us on the correct path.

To God be the Glory, Amen

Invitation to Offering:

Jesus reminds us that following him means more than simply believing the right things. It means being willing to place our lives in his hands.

Our offering is one way we practice that kind of trust. We give not because God needs what we have, but because giving reminds us that everything we have already belongs to him. Our gifts become part of God's work in ways we may never see and in places we may never go.

So as we give today, may we offer more than our money. May we offer God our plans, our priorities, our time, our talents, and our willingness to follow wherever he leads.

Let us give faithfully and joyfully.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, before we leave this place, we ask you to take what we have offered today and use it for your glory. Bless these gifts and multiply them so that lives may be touched, needs may be met, and the good news of Jesus Christ may be shared.

And now, Lord, as we head back into another week, help us pay attention to the road ahead. When we are headed in the right direction, give us strength to keep going. When we begin to wander, love us enough to redirect us. And when following you takes us somewhere we never expected to go, give us enough faith to trust the One who knows the way.

Keep our eyes on Jesus, our hearts open to your leading, and our feet ready to follow.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.