

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost – 2026

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

Here are a few different ways to say the same thing. Each of these phrases has advantages and disadvantages. Here's the first: "You have no idea what you're talking about." The advantage of this phrase is that it's easily understood, it's clean, direct and forceful. The disadvantage is that the person to whom you have directed this statement may begin to suspect that you're talking down to them. This phrase is sometimes used as friendly banter among chums. You have no idea what you're talking about! Sometimes, it's used between husband and wife (not at our best moments). Sometimes it's used in a formal debate or between rivals or those arguing the merits of ending daylight savings. You have no idea what you're talking about. You've probably said it and it's probably been said to you.

Here's another: "You're way out of your depth here, Sonny." The advantage to this phrase is that it's gentler than the previous. It is a warning that there are aspects to the discussion that the person being spoken to hasn't properly considered. This is the "wise-old-owl" approach, but the meaning is the same. You're out of your league here, Sonny, is a popular variation. The disadvantage is that the person being spoken to may begin to think that you're being patronizing. Here's a third: "Your line of argumentation is deeply flawed and myopic. Your logic is littered with non-sequiturs, and any prepubescent child could quickly eviscerate your pedantic reasoning." This is the high-brow equivalent of "You don't know what you're talking about." It's equally devastating but a little long-winded and the person you're speaking to may not have a thesaurus on hand.

How about this one: "Get thee behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man" (Matthew 16:23). Jesus said that. Jesus said that to one of His dearest. It's a blistering indictment. It was deserved. It was instructive, and necessary, and it left a mark. Rehearsing what made this indictment necessary is easy. Our Lord had elicited a confession of faith from Simon. It was a high-water mark for Simon and Jesus gives voice to the origin of Simon's confession: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). What was Simon's confession? "You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Glorious! The eyes of Simon's heart were alive; he saw with clarity what we can only see by faith. Jesus named Simon "rock" (Peter). The time was ripe. The time to teach the disciples what it meant *to be* the Christ had arrived. And then it all went south.

Jesus gave His beloved disciples a good look at what was coming. It wasn't pretty, at least according to a worldly perspective. Cross, and blood and shame and suffering and death. Jesus gave it to them straight. And their minds rebelled. Peter was the one who spoke, but I suspect that the lot of them were in rebellion. "No!" their spirits cried. Peter went off: "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you" (Matthew 16:22). It takes brass to rebuke Jesus. I don't recommend it. Peter flipped Christianity upside down. Peter was, in a very real sense, an agent of Satan, verbalizing a false religion, a selfish religion, an inert religion. That... is us.

That false perception of what is divine and good and blessed in the deepest sense – that false perception belongs to my sinful nature... and yours.

I'm reading a book about Abraham Lincoln, titled *And There Was Light*, by Jon Mecham. I like it so far. I'm in the bit that is leading up to his election as president. Lincoln has engaged in the famous debates with Stephen Douglas and lost the Illinois Senate election to the same fellow. The tragic Supreme Court case known as *Dred Scott* had just been handed down. The book provides a disconcerting look at the men who espoused the merits of slavery and their lines of argumentation. Clergymen in the South were twisting God's Word as a defense for the enslavement of their fellow man. It's repulsive and infuriating and astonishing all at once. Man is capable of wretched things. Man will hold to wretched theological ideas. Man will call evil good and good evil. What about you?

Peter wanted his own religion. What about you? Peter wanted his own made-up god. What about you? Never Lord! Far be it from you, Lord! This cross thing is a mistake. You offering Yourself as a sacrifice for sins is a mistake. You are a prince, THE Prince, and God's Son has too much glory, too much power to squander it this way – the cross is a mistake. Never, Lord! What about you?

You may want to think that Christianity allows you to think what you want on certain issues because, after all, there are so many other Christians, other church bodies who believe this or that – that love is love, that fornication is only a sin when you're *young* and unmarried, that sins of omission aren't that big a deal, that I can ignore my neighbor in need, that I can leave the unborn to the whim of society, that I can reject the command to return to God a portion of what He has given me. "You do not have in mind the things of God but the things of man." How many "things of man" do you have percolating in your mind? Where, pray tell, is that going to get you? Is curtsying to the things of man the road to peace? Does aligning yourself with the world's vain philosophy bring you joy? Will the Holy Spirit gladly share your heart with demons? St. Paul wrote this: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" (1 Corinthians 10:21-22).

Do we submit to God's Word? Are we endeavoring to keep His commandments? Do we serve others easily, speak the truth easily, deny ourselves easily, take up our cross easily? After Jesus told Peter that Peter didn't know what he was talking about, Jesus told Rock what was in store. The cross *will* come to us. Christ's life isn't static. Christ's life invades our own. We, as disciples, aren't detached from the Lord of the cross. His life penetrates our own – heart, mind, body, spirit, and soul. His death is in us. His resurrection is in us. His holiness is in us. This mystical union is the actual, substantial presence of God Himself dwelling in the believer (Colossians 1:27). His cross is our cross. We *will* pick it up. His cross is life for us. We die to self. The old man in us is a selfish brute and He is to be crucified daily, by repentance. Christ's resurrection, His love, His fidelity and His interest in His neighbor – that too is in you, and it is to be manifested in what we say and do.

Courage, love, and devotion are alive in us. That is exactly what leads us to take up our cross and follow Christ the King. Living for self is a bitter contradiction. Living for self is a defiance

of all that is true and good and noble and enduring. Picking up our crosses and following Christ is where peace and joy are found. Sadly, there are those who would entice you to give up your faith, to serve yourself, to eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. They don't know what they are talking about. I don't advise you to take our Lord's words to Peter upon your own lips. But I do advise you to listen carefully to Jesus' rebuke, to ponder its necessity in the face of Peter's foolish tirade. With me, recommit to having in mind the things of God. The things of God are a suffering but triumphant Savior. He is glory incarnate as He hangs on the Holy Cross. Love is anchored there and received here in His body and blood. Christ's flesh is full of grace, and you eat and drink the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. His Kingdom is our heart's desire. He took us out of the poverty of our sin, washed us in His blood, and gave us a seat at His altar. The Lord Christ shepherds us through this life and leads us toward our heavenly destiny. Our heavenly Father graciously defends us against all danger, guards and protects us from all evil. This our Father does only out of fatherly, divine, goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. For all this it is our duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.