**Sunday 3rd September 2023: Option 1 - Matthew 16 21-28**

***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[*[*f*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23698f)*] 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.”*

**Notes***“What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”*

Whilst the context of the passage talks about physical security, arrest, suffering, even execution for the sake of the gospel, this specific reference to gaining the whole world widens out the things that can possibly detract us from following Jesus, and hints at money, status, power and things like that.  
  
But few of us are likely to have the option of gaining the whole world, even if we wanted to, so the force of the challenge of this verse is often overlooked, and put in the “it doesn’t apply to me” box.

Nevertheless, there could be some more modest financial objectives that, either consciously or perhaps sub-consciously, we aspire to. We can be tempted to prioritise our western of financial values of security, planning for the future, living a reasonable life, providing for our children and family, above our spiritual values of wanting to be a disciple of Jesus.  
  
But Jesus says “what’s the point?”. Where will it get us? What will it achieve? A nice life, a better life, a more comfortable life? Maybe, in fact quite probably yes. But then what?  
  
Giving, in particular giving to and through our local parish Church, is a great way of declaring to our innermost being that we are prioritising God first. We put his values above our own. In that sense it’s a sacrifice. And it’s worship. We joyfully bring our gifts to the alter, not out of a sense of compulsion, not because someone’s told us we must, but because we affirm, every time we give, every time we see that standing order go out from our account, that we are seeking to rise to Jesus’s incredible challenge. Absolutely nothing is worth more than finding our faith in Him.

**End**