In Nomine Jesu

St Mt 16:21-28

No Pain / No Gain

Come on, Jesus, Get a Grip! Yes, you are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God! But you can't love that much! Get a Grip! Use your Head! Yes - you have it right that Jerusalem is the Enemy city - yes, the elders & chief priests & scribes are all out to get you! - yes you will undoubtedly have to "undergo great suffering" & they probably "kill you" - but don't count on that "rising on the 3rd Day." That has to be some kind of non-sensical fantasy! You can't love that much. Get a Grip! (Yes, it may make some sense to save your own skin) - but Jesus sees the bigger picture. And so Jesus turns to Peter & looks him straight in the eye & says, "Get behind me, Satan. - you deceiver - you manipulator - you "stumbling block! There is "no easier softer way." There are no other options*! Catch the imperative "I must go to Jerusalem - I must undergo great suffering!" Let that sink in: "No pain, no gain!" That's the necessary ingredient of discipleship.

The Christ the Messiah the Son of the Living God must not surrender like that

* No ifs & or buts

[I love the story entitled, "Nobody Wins Until We All Do." A young man had

trained for months to run the 100 meter race in the Special Olympics. When the gun went off he leaped out in front of the rest - but in his excitement his feet went in different directions & he tumbled down right in front the the starting block. The other racers - each as eager to complete as he was - stopped running - turned back to help him. The crowd came to their feet as they lifted him up & then walked arm-in-arm across the finish line together.

Jesus has come to "seek & to save the lost." That's us - each of us - all of us! Did you ever stop to think about the fact that God loved you so much that He gave His dearest & best just for you? His one & only Son? You are Precious - Just one of you is worth more to the whole world.... Do you remember Jesus' story about the shepherd who cannot rest as long as even one sheep is still missing, despite the 99 of them who aren't - about the father who day after day after day waits on the road watching for his lost son to come home, even though he still has one son who is serving him ably & well - about the King holding a

banquet, who will not start serving dinner until every place is filled at the Great Table?.... I wonder what this world would be like — what our country would be like — what our congregation would be like if we lived by the rule: Nobody Wins until We all Do!

Jesus tells His disciples as He tells us: "If any want to become My follower, let them deny themselves & take up their cross & follow Me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, & those who lose their life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?".... Elsewhere Jesus said "I have come that you may have life — have it abundantly — have it eternally — I am the Resurrection & the Life!" This little earthly time here is not even a "Drop in the Ocean" compared to eternity!

So let's get real — get a grip! Let's stop running from our crosses & losses! Let's stop running from our pain. Yes, to live — to be a human being — is to suffer pain — either physical pain or

emotional pain or the pain of injustice. In one way or another - one time or another - everybody is mistreated, and people scream out, "It's not fair! It's not fair!" That's right! That's right's! Life this side of eternity is not fair. And so we devise all kinds of ways to deny our pain. That's what the abuse of alcohol & other drugs is all about, It's a way to kill the pain.... When you drink or drug you feel as if you have no problems & you delude yourself, I can ask you anything, but you can tell me nothing. Other addictions M.S.P - Money, Sex, Power - these are all anesthetics we use to deny the fact that we are "Creatures Unto Death." St Augustine was right, "If we were born to be happy, we would not be born to die." That's why A.A. & N.A. have adopted the slogan, "No pain, No gain!" That means admitting you are powerless over the pain that comes into your life. The only people I know who are able to translate Trouble into Triumph / Crosses into Crowns / are people who accept the fact that "Pain is what I have to suffer & c God's Help I am going to play the hand that was dealt me. I'm not going to sit back & rail against it - I'm not going to anesthetize

it – I'm going to stop running & hang on to Jesus' promise: "Those who lose their life for My sake will find it."

Too often we find ourselves tuned in to one radio station: WIFM. Those call letters stand for: "What's in It for Me?" I suggest we change the station to WHAM. Those call letters stand for: "Winners Are Always Ministers" + Give! Give! Give! – Serve! Serve! Serve! St Paul calls himself, "Christ's Bond-Slave!" and I don't think any of us could be a better, more committed, dedicated disciple than the apostle Paul. There is no better example of a man "lost his life for Jesus' sake + then found it" + no better example of the slogan: "No pain, No Gain!"