

Pentecost 16-September 12, 2021

Baltic and East Nidaros Joint Worship (Rally Day)

Mark 8:27-38

“He Began to Teach Them”

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from his Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

On this Rally Day as we launch into a new year of teaching. Teaching Sunday School, Confirmation, and adult bible classes. The scriptures for today, overall, are great scriptures about teaching. I like the first lesson for today as Isaiah acknowledges the gift of teaching is one that God has given him. Isaiah was not chosen to teach God’s people because he was a good teacher. Isaiah declared that it was the Lord who gave him the tongue of a teacher. Isaiah was amazed how morning after morning the Lord spoke into his ear and equipped him to be a teacher even though he never would have believed he would be called to tell others about God.

*The second lesson for today from James on the other hand is not a scripture that fits well with Rally Day. After our education boards have been hard at work recruiting Sunday School teachers, James does not help the cause when the first words that you heard from this reading for today were, “Not many of you should become teachers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” Who among us is looking for one more opportunity to be criticized? And especially after **volunteering** to be a Sunday School teacher. So, I pray that James does not scare our teachers from now doing what they have said they would do. I fully believe that teaching our youth is one of the highest callings in our church today.*

Thank goodness this reading from James is not the only lesson that we have for Rally Sunday. The gospel for today from Mark is a wonderful guide for students and teachers of Jesus Christ since in this reading we learn that it is Jesus Christ himself who is doing the teaching and you can’t learn from a better teacher than Jesus.

A good teacher wants to know what their students know before they begin teaching them. You need to establish what they know before you decide what you will begin teaching them. Jesus begins his teaching today by giving a pre-test to his disciples to get an idea of what people in the community who have been watching and listening to him by asking them who people say that he is. Unfortunately, not one of the disciples had heard anyone say the man who had done amazing things believed that he was Jesus. Instead, they believe the person who was

doing these things was one of the prophets who foretold the coming of Jesus like John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. No one reported that everyone believed Jesus had arrived.

Since the people didn't know who Jesus was, maybe it was Jesus' disciples who were the problem and were not doing a good job of teaching about what Jesus came to do for them. So, the next test that Jesus gave was to his own disciples when he asked them, "Who do YOU say that I am?" Jesus had a moment of hopefulness for his teacher disciples when Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Messiah". This is exactly the correct answer that Jesus wanted to hear. Messiah means that Jesus came to save his people. Other gospel versions of this story even add a few words that Jesus spoke complimenting Peter for giving the right answer. In these other accounts of this story Jesus calls Peter blessed and tells Peter and the other disciples that they will be the rock on which he will build his church. However, Mark skips over any compliments from Jesus to Peter since we are told that what immediately comes next is anything but complimentary.

After Jesus agrees with Peter and his disciples that he is the Messiah, Jesus explains to them how this will take place. Jesus describes four things that must take place for him to become our Savior. Jesus said that first he would undergo great suffering, then he would be rejected by all the religious leaders, then he would be killed, and after three day he would rise again. Jesus made no bones about what he would face before saving us. He didn't offer these four steps for becoming a savior to his disciples for their consideration or feedback. He declared to them what **MUST** take place. After Peter heard that Jesus would be killed, he could stand it longer and spoke up and rebuked what Jesus said must take place.

This was the **first** time Jesus described to his disciples what he would go through to become our savior and these disciples did not understand these words of Jesus and in this case maybe the words from James would apply to Jesus' disciples when he said, "Not many of you should become teachers." Not yet anyway. They needed to learn more from Jesus before they were ready to teach others that new life (the Easter story) only makes sense after hearing that Jesus had to suffer and die.

When Jesus began to teach his disciples, he didn't turn to the beginning of scripture and teach them about the Creation story. They should have already learned this story. When Jesus began to teach his disciples, he didn't start with the Ten Commandments. The Jewish leaders were experts in teaching the law and this topic should have been well covered. When Jesus began to teach his disciples, he didn't ask them to put together a Christmas program that would celebrate his birth.

When Jesus began to teach his disciples, he began by teaching them what he would do for them. Jesus began to teach them about the gospel. Jesus began by teaching them that we cannot save ourselves by worshipping Creation or by keeping the law or by celebrating Christmas. Jesus taught that he would save us from our sinfulness by suffering for us, being rejected by us, and going to the cross for us so that on Easter we would believe that all this he did for us, and we would want to share this good news with everyone.

Today we give thanks for teachers who are willing to give their time to teach our youth. As we learned from Isaiah today, you do not do this alone. You, like Isaiah, have been given God's word and will give it to you day after day. We give thanks for our parents who will find the time to bring their children to church and to Sunday School to learn what Jesus has to say to them. And we give thanks to our student's eagerness to gladly hear what Jesus has done for them.

Each of us will soon confess that we are not ashamed of the gospel. When we confess our faith, we believe that Jesus did suffer, that Jesus was crucified, that Jesus was buried and that after three days he rose again. All of this he did for you. Amen