

Pentecost 18-September 26, 2021

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Church

Mark 9:38-50

## "In Jesus' Name" Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our redeemer. Amen*

*Few things get Jesus riled up more than when someone becomes a stumbling block for the new faith of others. Jesus is clear, if you are not preaching in Jesus' name or are trying to stop someone who is, you are against Jesus, and it would be better if you would be drowned in the sea with a millstone hung around your neck. We are often quick to be critical of what other people are doing differently from us rather than simply doing what we are called to do.*

*The first reading for today is a great example of what happens when the church experiences growth. Moses, who was called to lead God's chosen people out of bondage, wanted some help from the very beginning of his call. Moses told the Lord that he wasn't a good communicator, so he asked the Lord if his brother Aaron would join in this cause to freedom by being his spokesman. And the Lord agreed. This went well until this church began to grow even more. You can empathize with Moses and Aaron because their church had grown to more they could handle. They needed more help. Their main job had become dealing with complaints of the people rather than leading God's people to freedom.*

*God sympathized with these two leaders as well. He gave Moses' permission to really ramp up his staff by increasing it to 70 more people. The Lord came down from a cloud and blessed them and we are told that the spirit rested on them, and they did what they were called to do. They preached. One day, two of these preachers named Eldad and Medad were preaching in the camp. It doesn't say what they were preaching about, but Joshua who was Moses' assistant came to him and told him to stop their preaching. Moses knew what was at the heart of Joshua's complaint by replying to him, "Are you jealous for my sake?" Joshua wasn't jealous for Moses' sake or for God's sake, Joshua was just jealous because Eldad and Medad were preaching, and people were listening to them. Moses teaches Joshua a lesson he needed to hear. His calling from God was not to stop others from proclaiming God's word to people, but to go and do it.*

*The church did not stop growing. It was growing even more quickly after Jesus gathered his first 12 disciples and crowds of people started to follow Jesus as he freed them from demons and diseases that were enslaving them. Once again, the workload became too great for these*

12 disciples and when other followers of Jesus began to preach in Jesus' name, some of the original 12 became jealous.

You can understand the reason for their jealousy. These disciples who had been experiencing success stories in their ministry had now become **self**-confident in what they were accomplishing rather than trusting that their successes were done in the name of Jesus. This became very clear when a man who had a demon possessed son came to the disciples and they failed to heal the boy. They felt even worse when the father of this boy told Jesus about their inability to heal his son. It was then the disciples did what most people do when things aren't going well, they complained about what they saw someone else was doing.

You wonder what did they expect Jesus to say when they came to him and said that they saw someone casting out demons in Jesus' name and they tried to stop him? Did they expect Jesus to thank them for attempting to stop someone from doing what they had just failed to do? And the disciples even failed in their efforts to stop this person from exorcising demons. They didn't say that they stopped this person. They said they tried to. The disciples identified why they failed to stop this person. This person was not against Jesus. He was for Jesus, and he was casting out the demons **in Jesus' name**.

So, what do these stories have to do with you and me? This scripture spoke to me this week when I was in Pierre at the Fall Theological Conference and as I met with other pastors who are still in the first three years of their first call. I met several pastors who did not attend the same seminary that I attended. Several of these pastors had different professors than I learned from. These pastors might be doing things differently than I do. I found myself tempted to believe my calling in ministry was to correct some of their teaching and preaching. I became focused on what they were doing differently from me rather than learning from them what they were doing in Jesus' name.

Jesus finishes this lesson to his disciples with a lesson seasoning with the use of salt. They had been taught the Old Testament requirement of seasoning sacrifices with salt before offering them to God. However, this sacrificial system never brought peace to God's people.

Jesus turns to his disciples but does not quote the previous requirement about salting sacrifices from Leviticus 13:2, "**And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.**" Instead, Jesus tells his disciples to have peace with each other **you must have salt within yourselves**. You must have **Jesus** within you.

*Today's readings are good reminders of what we as a church and followers of Jesus are first not to do and what we are to do. It is not our calling to tell Jesus what others are doing differently from us especially when they are doing it in Jesus' name. It is our calling of simply delivering Jesus to God's children of all ages. This is what we are doing today as we deliver Jesus into the hands of children eager to learn more about what Jesus has done for them and as we deliver Jesus into the hands of sinners eager to hear his unconditional words of forgiveness. Let all we do today, be done in Jesus' name. Amen*