

Lent 3-March 3, 2024

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, John 2:13-22

“Death and Resurrection”

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

One of the conversations that I find myself having with many people lately is that communication is hard. Sometimes I even say it is exhausting. Whether it is remembering schedules that get communicated in many different forms for the variety of activities of family members or sending timely, helpful reminders to the parents of students to relay times and places of events with clarity or even communication within our own house, getting the message straight can be hard.

We have so many more options in how to communicate today than we did 30 years ago. I remember it was in 1997 when I sent my first email. I tried to have an open mind about this new means of communication, but I really wondered if it would ever be something I would use very much. I'm not exactly sure when I got my first cell phone, but I embraced this idea and was optimistic about its future use. It wasn't long after we could talk to each other, the addition of texting using your cell phone was introduced and that new idea I was less excited about. I thought if people don't have time to call and talk, why bother with texting. It wasn't long before I understood the benefit of texting and allowing people to be informed when it is convenient for them to read their messages. Now the different platforms of social media have added even more ways to communicate with each other. But despite having more options to communicate, I often wonder if having so many means of communicating is part of the problem why communication can be so hard.

However, as straightforward as messages were delivered throughout scripture, communication was confused as much then as it was today. From the very beginning, God told Adam and Eve that they could eat from absolutely any tree from the garden except one. How much clearer could that be? One rule to follow delivered to two people. But as clearly as this message was communicated, in this case, we can probably blame Satan for causing Adam and Eve to question what God had just told them.

In the first lesson that we heard today, the Lord gave more than one command. He delivered 10 commandments for his people to follow. We already know how that turned out. If God's chosen people couldn't obey one rule, having ten rules to follow weren't going to increase the odds of obedience. When we think of the Ten Commandments, we often visualize Moses with his white beard holding them inscribed on the two stone tablets. In the reading for today, there is no mention of tablets of stone. The Lord was using the same method of communication that he did when he gave the one rule to Adam and Eve. The introduction to the first lesson describes how the ten commandments were first delivered. It says, "God spoke all these words." God spoke to them, but this time I don't think we can lay all the blame on Satan for not obeying all these words that were spoken to us.

I suppose it would be safe to assume that some of the people that heard these words might have been hard of hearing, so that could be part of the problem of why these commands weren't obeyed. It is also likely that

people might have been distracted by what was going on around them and heard only some of the words rather than ALL the words that were spoken. Then there is the distinct possibility that these people could have had memory issues and had trouble remembering ALL the words. God's word was always meant to be spoken, but when it came to the commandments and the problems that quickly revealed they were not being followed, the Lord used another means of communication by writing them down on the tablets of stone. That means of communication should have taken care of issues of clarity and memory, but the real problem in keeping the commandments was that sin had already entered the world and looking at the commandments was like looking into a mirror and the reflection it presented to the one who was attempting to keep the commandments was not good.

Another problem with communication is that when we don't like what we first hear, we often quit listening and we don't hear everything we need to. This is the problem that Jesus was having with his disciples. Last week we heard how Jesus told his disciples for the first time that he must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed. After not liking all these things that were going to happen to Jesus, the disciples quit listening to the rest of what Jesus had to say. The words "And after three days rise again" never made it through their ears. The disciples only heard about death. They and Peter in particular rebuked Jesus for talking about the cross and how he would die.

The way of the cross continues to be foolish and a stumbling block for people who want to attempt to save themselves. Jesus told us to be saved, we must deny ourselves, not save ourselves. And this is what angered Jesus so much when he went to Jerusalem and saw what was happening in the temple.

The Jews who had come to observe the Passover were doing what the law demanded. They were offering sacrifices based on what they could afford to atone for the sins they had committed. The temple was used as a place for people to reflect on their obedience to the law and offer a sacrifice to God to become right with God. Jesus saw what had become of worship and was about to overturn more than the tables where they were exchanging money that day. As we are already in the middle of the season of Lent, we are reminded in this story that Jesus knew that he would soon be going to the cross to put an end to the offering of sacrifices and he alone would be the only sacrifice that could make all people right with God. Jesus would die AND rise again. Jesus would not die and not rise, nor would he rise to power without dying first. Jesus would do both for you and for me.

The cross is foolishness...for those who are perishing. But to us, those who are being saved it is the power of God. The Jews wanted Jesus to show them a sign. He obliged their request, but they didn't understand the sign he presented. He said that would destroy the temple and raise it up again in three days. They responded that they had been working on the temple for 46 years and hadn't completed it. Jesus was not going to finish the work they had begun. Jesus was going to finish the work of salvation that only he could do, and it would be through the cross. It would be through his death and resurrection.

Preaching Christ crucified is still a foolish message for those who are perishing, but you who are being saved, it is good news. Amen