

“QUESTIONS”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This week's lessons led me to two questions: first, "What teacher had the greatest influence on you?", and second, "What was it that they did or said that made you feel that way?" I asked those questions Tuesday morning to Pastor Dow and Tom, and they both could give an answer rather quickly. There was more than one that they could each name. I am sure that many of you could as well. Any volunteers want to answer? Personally, I have had many at different stages of my life that taught me different lessons. In second grade, Mrs. Thompson, who was in a by-racial marriage which for the early 1960's I guess was just about unheard of. She taught me that the color of a person's skin does not matter, and relationships can take place when there is mutual respect no matter what the color of a person's skin is. In junior high school it was my English teacher at the end of the school year that took me aside and talked to me about how she knew that I was a better student than I had been that year. I never missed an honor roll after that year. When I went back to college, it was Professor Bill Green that I had for African American Studies and the discussions we had within class and discussions outside of class. Those are just a few that have made a difference in my life who were trained teachers, but of course there have been others who have taught me many lessons outside of a classroom.

Isaiah would not have been teaching in a classroom, and those that James wrote to about being teachers would not have either, and of course we know that even though Jesus taught thousands of people who followed and surrounded him -- there was never a classroom involved either.

So, what is it about the teachers in the many aspects of our lives that they have made a difference? What made the different from those who did not stand out? I would say that it has to do with relationship. A relationship that you could feel that they really cared about you, listened to you, and wanted the very best for you. That they were able to show you was compassion when it was most needed.

Isaiah understood what he had been given, as it says, ***“the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word.”*** James gave a warning to those who were to become teachers that they needed to know that they: ***“will be judged with greater strictness.”***

When Jesus was teaching his disciples, he presented them with two questions, **“Who do people say that I am?”** and **“But who do you say that I am?”** For the first question you might say it sounds like different disciples called out an answer of who they had overheard along the way, but Peter spoke for them all as he said, **“You are the Messiah.”** Give the man a new pair of sandals for getting the correct answer. But, and there is a but, as Jesus tells them not to tell anybody yet...because there are some events ahead for him that must transpire before they can openly let the world know who he is.

You might say that Peter did not like what Jesus had to say and was vocal about it, and then Jesus came back at him with a retort that you might say brought Peter up short. Peter who eventually would be the rock that the church was built upon. Peter who would be a teacher that would eventually point billions of people over the decades to Jesus and the cross.

So, here is my last question for today, “Who was your best teacher who gave you the cross? Oh, I do not mean a physical cross that you might wear or hang on a wall, but the understanding of what the cross means for those of us who call ourselves Christians. We are talking about the *teacher* who taught you the importance of being a part of a faith community, the *teacher* who showed you the love of Christ in word and deed, the *teacher* that taught you that faith is a life-long journey and that you never stop learning of how the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit show themselves to you in many and various ways, the *teacher* who inspired *you* to become a *teacher* for another or many others along the way, the *teacher* who showed you the way to be able to answer Jesus’ question, **“But who do you say that I am?”** with conviction and assurance...”You are Jesus, my Savior and Redeemer, and I will take up my cross and follow you now and into eternity.” Amen.