

“QUESTIONS”

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

As we look at today's lesson from Mark, there are a few things that we need to take into consideration about this gospel. In many respects the disciples just do not seem to get what Jesus is trying to tell them and teach them. Mark is the gospel that has the abrupt ending, where the women leave the tomb and out of fear said nothing to anyone. So, it is as if Jesus is explaining the resurrection to them early. Since they seem to have trouble understanding what he is telling them he must do it more than once. Today they are hearing it for the second time, but it will happen again. It also seems that the disciples are hesitant or afraid to ask questions of Jesus. I believe we can all relate to that. Most people have not asked a question because they did not want to look uninformed, or dare, I say, stupid. Yet, how many teachers have said to students there is no such thing as a stupid question?

Last week we were in chapter 8 in Mark and Jesus and his disciples are in Caesarea Philippi where Jesus had asked them two questions: ***“Who do people say that I am?”***, and ***“But who do you say that I am?”*** After Peter's answer saying that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells them not to tell anyone yet. Today we are in chapter 9, but there have been some things that have transpired before we enter today's lesson.

Jesus had taken Peter, James, and John up a high mountain and had been transfigured before them, where Jesus then had a conversation with Moses and Elijah. Then Jesus told those three not to tell anybody about what they had witnessed. Jesus and the three joined the other disciples who were surrounded by a great crowd and some scribes who were arguing with the disciples. It seems that a father had brought his son to the disciples to have a spirit removed from him and the disciples were unable to do it. During the encounter between Jesus and the father, the father says to Jesus, ***“I believe; help my unbelief!”*** How many of us maybe have not only said that out loud, but it has been in our thoughts, and our minds, and our prayers many times. Of course, Jesus drove the spirit out of the boy and now we enter today's lesson.

As Jesus is teaching his disciples and telling them once again what is going to happen to him, I guess you could say it is that aspect that for many people you must tell them and explain something more than once for them to get it. After all

what he is trying to tell them is that soon there will be changes taking place and they need to be prepared.

When Jesus asks them what they had been arguing about, and I am sure after taking a good look at their feet they finally told him, that they had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest. Now, Jesus really had to burst their bubbles and tell them that is not how it is going to work. If you want to be first, you need to be last and servant of all. In other words, you need to humble yourselves. For many people think that means they should have a low self-esteem, but that is not what humble means at all. To be humble means that you are unpretentious, you are modest, you show a lack of vanity, and you meet people where they are at. When Jesus took the child into his arms and told his disciples if they welcomed the child, they welcomed him, and then the one who sent him. We have to remember that at this time a child may have been loved in their family, but in society at large they held no standing at all. The world did not revolve around a child like they do in too many households today.

I remember once when we were on vacation and there was a family, and they were discussing what they were going to do, but their child was demanding that they wanted to do what was planned for the next day, NOW! I looked at this child and said, "You know you are very lucky to have parents that are taking you on this wonderful vacation, but they are the adults, and you need to listen to them." And then I walked on. I have no idea what they did that day or the next, but I hoped I was a little helpful.

Back to this child who has no standing in society, who Jesus welcomes and shows love for. Sometimes hearing a lesson is not enough, but being shown a lesson brings understanding. Here he is showing his disciples how they need to welcome those who are the outcasts, those who may not have standing in society. You know many of those who we have been walking with. Perhaps very few of us will ever be great, but by our actions, there will be greatness.

Jesus shows them repeatedly why he was sent by the Father, and that it is all about relationships. In his teaching, in his healing, in his preaching...relationships were formed and renewed. In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, our relationship with God has been restored and renewed, allowing us to humbly meet people where they are at, welcome them and serve them. Just as you and I have been met, welcomed, and served as the children of God that you and I are. Amen.