

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon 9.26.21 Mark 9:38-50

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ Amen.

We have just heard from 4 different books of the bible and with the exception of James, we are seeing a couple of messages running through our readings, though they might be in James as well if we dig a little. Our first reading starts way back in the beginning, well not way back "in the beginning" beginning but we are only at the beginning of the story of the nation of Israel. They really aren't even a nation yet they are a tribe wandering in the desert with nothing binding them together except really their faith.

So, this is the first thing, the first theme, the first good word, that comes to us today from our holy scriptures from Our God speaking to us here and now. We are the continuation of this same body of faith. We believe in our God, who walked with the Israelites in the wilderness and got them through, who guided and saved the nation of Israel time and time again, who delivered all of humanity through the birth life, death and resurrection of the Son, Jesus our Christ.

So, we are a part of this body, this thing that unites us when nothing really else can or should. That is our God at work. That is our God bringing us together because that is how we were meant to exist, with our God and with each other. And that's how things would be in a perfect world right? If way back in the beginning and this time I am talking about way back in the beginning, we as human beings hadn't screwed in all up and sinned.

But that's really the perfect segway into the other theme that is present. Strife.

And I'm sure this really isn't a surprise. We live in the very midst of a world groaning in pain and strife. In division. In this community we are divided by our politics, we are divided by Covid, we are divided by denominations, we are divided by our finances. We are divided by what we hold to be important in our lives.

And these divisions are hurting us. We walk down the street and we censor ourselves as so that we can have any sort of conversation with our neighbors. We feel as if there is always something that we cannot share, always so part of ourselves that we cannot show to others.

And yet there is one that we show our whole selves to. That is our God. our God who created us and loves us and calls us into the world, when we would rather detach. It is that same Jesus who called for unity in today's gospel.

It really is a call for unity. Jesus Ministry isn't even three years old yet and Jesus is still there guiding them and people are already dividing about who's doing things right. It's just ridiculous. And also a sad statement about the human condition.

But there is hope. There is always hope because of our God. Our God who defied the power of death. Our God who threw down the devil and has won us our victory. Our God who reigns and who has invited us to live with him forever. That is our God and that is who we follow.

Jesus told his disciples, Jesus tells us, to first follow him. Stop looking at your neighbors and what everyone else is doing and look at me. And then through my eyes, see the world. See these people that I love, see these people who I created and adore, see these people I walk with through every one of their struggles and pains, and with whom I laugh and I sing.

See these people as I see them says the Lord. See that nothing they say or do or believe can separate them from my love. Stop judging these people and see them through my eyes.

And then Jesus being Jesus finishes that with a “cause there’s going to be hell to pay if you don’t!”

But that message of seeing one another as Christ see us is an incredible gift. It gives us the opportunity to look at our selves and see what abilities the gifts, the talents that we have been blessed with for making our neighbors lives better. Because that is the best answer to strife. And that is what James today is talking about, grumpy stern James is telling us how to live a strong wholesome life in the faith we are given by our God. And that faith is the answer to the pain we see around us. Amen.