

September 12th, 2021 – Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost

Introduction to the Day

Three weeks ago we heard Peter's confession of faith as told in John's gospel. This week we hear Mark's version, when Peter says, "You are the Messiah." In John, the stumbling block is Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh, given for the life of the world. In Mark too the scandal has to do with Jesus' words about his own coming death, and here Peter himself stumbles over Jesus' words. But Jesus is anointed (the meaning of *messiah*) in Mark only on the way to the cross (14:3); so we are anointed in baptism with the sign of the cross.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose teaching is life,
whose presence is sure,
and whose love is endless.

Amen.

Let us confess our sins to the one who welcomes us
with an open heart.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God our comforter:

like lost sheep, we have gone astray.

We gaze upon abundance and see scarcity.

**We turn our faces away from injustice and
oppression.**

We exploit the earth with our apathy and greed.

Free us from our sin, gracious God.

Listen when we call out to you for help.

**Lead us by your love to love our neighbors as
ourselves.**

Amen.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

By the gift of grace in † Christ Jesus, God makes
you righteous.

Receive with glad hearts the forgiveness of all your
sins.

Amen.

Gathering Song

Prayer of the Day

O God, through suffering and rejection you bring forth our salvation, and by the glory of the cross you transform our lives. Grant that for the sake of the gospel we may turn from the lure of evil, take up our cross, and follow your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the
beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

^{9a}It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Children's Message

Gospel – Mark 8:27-38

²⁷Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” ³⁰And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

Just last week Jesus was confronted by characters that forced him to reimagine his idea of what his ministry would look like. The woman who came to the home where he was trying to hide, a gentile woman no less, demanded he acknowledge her place at the table. And, though reluctantly, he gave it to her. The crowd then brought to him a man who was deaf and spoke with an impediment, and though he sighed in healing him, he did look to the heavens and speak the words, “be opened,” and the man could hear and the man could speak.

Neither of these encounters are ones that Jesus chose. They happened in moments when Jesus was hoping to get away. But, they happened.

We continue hearing this theme of what it means to be 21st Century people of faith, living in this promise and mandate to make disciples of all nations and to build up the Body of Christ.

In our Gospel text, the hearers don't have the luxury of centuries of this story being told. They are living it in the moment. That is why we hear Jesus continually tell them to not tell others who he is. The phenomenon known as the Messianic Secret, a phenomenon that has been studied by scholars for generations. We don't ever, actually, get a clear answer as to why Jesus tell his disciples to tell no one, but we do know that they never listened.

We also know the story. And, we know that the suffering and death that he predicts here, does indeed happen. One school of thought (among many) with the Messianic Secret is that Jesus wanted others to come to believe in the same way that his disciples did. Perhaps he was concerned that if word spread before people experienced the Good News of God's Love for God's People that people would come in with their own pre-conceptions about who Jesus was. Perhaps that is why he asks the question after all.

But. Being 21st century people of faith, we have come to believe because we have heard the story told time and time again. Before the death and resurrection that He predicts here, his message was tell no one. AFTER his death and resurrection, his message become “go and tell everyone! Go and make disciples!”

The previous experiences that Jesus has just had show us how that is done. Remember, Jesus ministry is transformed when stories of people he otherwise would not have experienced are thrust upon him. Remember, building up the Body of Christ doesn't only happen in the neat and tidy, in fact it happens more frequently in the mess of the world.

We just so happen to have had these opportunities thrust upon us, as people of faith living in northwest Wisconsin, when more than 8,000 Afghan refugees were temporarily resettled at Fort McCoy (essentially just down the road from us). Earlier this week in conversations we started to imagine what their journey must have been like. Many of them, if lucky, had only a backpack to take with them, but that was likely rare. The miles traveled packed into military planes only to come to this completely foreign place awaiting resettlement.

And, in those conversations we started to ask what we were doing to help. We've seen the call for quilts as there will be a great need for bedding. We've seen calls from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services for funds as they are working with organizations to help in the resettlement process.

In imagining what their experience must have been and continues to be, we found ourselves drawn to figure out something. This is what being a part of the Body of Christ looks like. We didn't pick this, but here we are.

It is also interesting to note that this all comes 20 years from the attacks on 9/11. So often we long for the "unity" we experienced as a nation in the days and months following those attacks. However, if you were to talk to someone who doesn't look like 99.9% of the people that we will find in our worship on Sunday mornings, they may not have those same feelings of unity. And here we are, 20 years later, feeling this urge amid our calls to "Never Forget," to help those who look much like those who carried out those attacks.

Building up the Body of Christ, and taking up our cross and denying ourselves to do so, means hearing people's stories. It means laying aside the preconceptions that we have of people. Because, part of imagining what their experience must be like, is also facing the reality of the fear they carry into this new place that they have found themselves in.

To be the Body of Christ is to deny what will almost certainly be a dominant narrative of "why should we help them? Why is it up to us?"

So often, denying ourselves to build up the Body of Christ means getting beyond the easy excuses.

So often, denying ourselves to build up the Body of Christ means stepping into the mess of the world and realizing that we can, and will, actually make a difference.

So often, denying ourselves to build up the Body of Christ means admitting that we very well may be the "someone else" that is going to help when help is needed.

People of God, as we are inundated with the "Never Forget" of this somber anniversary, let us live that out in how we love our neighbors. Let us live that out in how we enter into the stories that we may not want to enter into. Let us live as Easter People who have been given the message of "Go and make disciples, that all would know God's love."

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Song of the Day

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Revealing God, you have made yourself known through bread and wine, water and word. Continue to nurture your church, that it is a place where your presence is experienced and shared. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, you brought life into being and called it good. Bring new creation to lands devastated by tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, and other disasters (*recent destructive events may be named here*). Restore forests and curb overflowing waters. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Protecting God, you desire all people to live in peace and safety. Provide for all who are in danger. Strengthen first responders to help meet to the complex needs of others. Provide care and compassion as they face trauma themselves. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Transforming God, you announce release to the captives and freedom to the oppressed. Break chains of discrimination and injustice. Amplify voices that go unheard and inspire us to advocate for the those who are overlooked. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Forming God, you gather this community together. Shape our communal life, that in our prayer, praise, and worship, we honor you and encourage one another. Keep our disagreements civil and increase our joy in working together. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Redeeming God, you accompany your people through every stage of life. We pray for those among us struggling in mind, body, and spirit – especially

We give you thanks for the saints who now rest in your embrace. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

God of abundance,

you cause streams to break forth in the desert
and manna to rain from the heavens.

Accept the gifts you have first given us.

Unite them with the offering of our lives

to nourish the world you love so dearly;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you’ve taken the elements say, “Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord’s Prayer

Sending Song

Blessing

People of God,

you are Christ's body,
bringing new life to a suffering world.

The holy Trinity, † one God,
bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Flowers on the altar are place this week by Roger and MaryLee Szymoniak in honor of their 57th wedding anniversary.

Savers Fundraiser

You can bring your cloth items to the church in white or black bags, marked SAVERS and put them in the Shepherd's Closet bin. They will do another drop off Nov. 11.