

Sunday, July 11th, 2021

8th Sunday of Pentecost

Mark 6: 30-34, *"Get away from it all... Go with Jesus and be with People"*.

Pastor Arndt

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So, he began teaching them many things.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Jesus, in our lesson for today, is acting like any reasonable Wisconsinite in the middle of Summer. He is resting and recharging his batteries. But notice the unique way that he does so. When we take vacation, we speak in terms of going to the cabin or to the lake. Jesus goes to people. What's more, whenever Jesus is around people, he gathers those people to the tree of His cross.

There's the old question, *"If a tree falls in the forest and there's no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?"* The answer, of course, is "yes" and "no". When a tree falls it makes a disturbance in the air. Those air waves are the source of what we call "sound". Unfortunately, sound waves are useless unless they bump into something and are "heard".

Jesus is resting and recharging this morning and He chooses you to join him. There is a tree that makes the most wonderful noise and Jesus would like to be sure that you hear it.

I. Jesus reconnects us with the Word.

Jesus listens to the disciples as they describe *"everything that they have done and taught"*. Jesus wants to listen to the details of their spiritual life and work in his kingdom. This is important because the disciples are easily distracted and oftentimes lose their focus. The message of the cross is still confusing to them.

"The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about." (Luke 18:34)

The cross is like a tree falling in their forest with no one there to hear it. Jesus is going to shepherd them to that cross. In doing so, he is also teaching them how to be good shepherds.

There is a beautiful progression that is taking place here in Mark's Gospel. At times, Jesus has spoken about the Gospel in parables and abstractions (*A farmer scattered seed... or this is what the Kingdom of God is like, etc.*). But now Jesus is making the Gospel a personal experience.

The disciples see the kingdom at work when Jesus drives evil spirits out of a man and sends those spirits into a herd of pigs. They watch in awe as Jesus raises a twelve-year-old girl from the dead and gives her

back to her parents. That's not a tree falling in empty woods. This is the Gospel as it is meant to be... discovered and experienced.

Jesus even begins to include the disciples in his ministry. Jesus sends the disciples ahead of him to preach the good news. We're about to hear about the feeding of the five thousand where Jesus challenges the disciples "*you give them something to eat.*" A pattern begins to emerge.

Time after time, the disciples are confronted with their weakness and Jesus' strength. Furthermore, the strength of Jesus increasingly focuses on one solitary item... the cross. There is a tree that is about to fall in their forest. Jesus wants the disciples to hear it.

Notice that there is a difference between talking *about* the Gospel (*as though it is a hypothetical tree in the forest*) and specifically *proclaiming* the Gospel to a soul. Mark's Gospel is a record of the countless ways that Jesus graciously applies himself to people's hearts. In this section, however, something unique is happening. The disciples tell Jesus about "*...all that they had done and taught*". They report to Jesus what they have said directly to people. These are the conversations that bring joy to Jesus!

If someone asked you why you were dressing up and where you were going this morning, you probably would tell them that you were going to church. Here is another way of thinking about it. You came here today to talk with me.

One of the comments that pastors long to hear is, "*Pastor, I feel like you were preaching directly to me today.*" Because pastors are sinful, preaching will always be a struggle. But that is always our goal... to "*speak directly to you.*" Actually, there is one comment thing that would be even better. That would be to hear a person say, "*Pastor, I feel like Jesus was speaking directly to me today!*" That is Jesus' goal as we carry out our ministry. This, specifically, is what Jesus has to say. "*Look at my perfect life and my innocent death. By that death I have removed your quilt forever. You are my own dear child.*"

This is the point in the sermon where our eyes uncomfortably meet and we ask ourselves the question, "How are we doing (I your pastor and you the parishioner) in your life of discovering and experiencing the Savior? Our lives are no different than the disciples. Things are busy. Even our time here at church is not immune. There are meetings to attend, events to plan, people to talk to. Even at church we must be careful that we don't fail to hear the tree falling in our forest.

This is where Jesus excels as our Good Shepherd. As Pastor and parishioner... At the busiest times of our lives, Jesus makes us lie down. He leads us to the green pasture and still waters of His Word. At the darkest times of our lives, he takes us to the Word and restores our soul.

Jesus is recharging his batteries. He chooses to do so with you. He takes you to a tree. He does not tell you about the tree. He places you in front of it so you can hear the beautiful sound yourself.

-Amen

