



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

June 24, 2018

Seeing OUT!

Mark 8:22-26

Growing Forward is our theme these Sundays...moving on in our Faith journey and growing deeper in our discipleship with God in Christ and with one another.

Mark is the first Gospel written, tradition has it, by John Mark, a companion of Peter who views the life of Jesus through the lens of the disciple called "Rock."

It is thought it was written during the persecution of Nero around 66-70 CE/AD. Shared for encouragement to those who named Jesus as "Lord," to be courageous in witness and to remember their calling to live faithfully in His name.

Mark intends to set two miracle stories before the turning point of Peter's confession (8:27-31) that Jesus is "Messiah, Anointed One, Son of the Living." As it so says, that discipleship begins and continues with deep hearing/listening up and seeing out into the world with the mission of the Church.

In the two miracle stories, last week's to the left (Mark 7:31-37), today's at the right in your bulletin, Jesus is on the road. He is moving towards Jerusalem.

Both seem purposely placed...to urge on, to challenge, to encourage disciples to be courageous and to know that Jesus is the man of action, powerful enough to change and to make all things new.

Last week's story is a miracle of healing which brings hearing and speaking...this one appears only in Mark and Matthew. (It is as if Matthew uses the story as a launching pad to show that Jesus is Messiah!)

Today, a miracle of healing which brings sight. This one placed just before Jesus, at a northern most points ask, "But you, who do YOU say that I am?" Pivot adaptive point where Jesus reaches into the hearts of His own. Calls them, calling us, to Listen UP! And to be Seeing OUT! into God's future then and now. Which is coming to the point where He will predict His suffering, rejection, death, and rising again.

Both likely are miracles which call disciples of Jesus to ListenUP! And to be about the mission of SeeingOUT into the world.

Notice that some commonalities appear: people brought both to Jesus; both were done in private; common tones of touch, prayer; results were immediate; neither engaged the sense of demon/evil possession. They are set pieces to show that Jesus' action results in a response.

The point is, in the first, that coming to Jesus is about being opened, tongues released, and speaking plainly.

The point, in the second, that coming to Jesus is about an increasing seeing, sight restored and learning to see everything clearly through the lens of forgiveness and reconciliation that leads to bold witness in the name of Jesus Christ in all times.

There is embedded in each story what it will mean to confess that Jesus is Messiah in the face of what may be seen as changing times. In an age when following Jesus might not be comfortable or the easiest way to live day by day.

I don't know how you hear it, but we live in time where it seems that the former patterns of life and witness no longer work; in time when the culture we share surges against the where trust is told, justice with mercy prevails, and peace/shalom is the by-product of the communities we live in each day.

It seems that the vision of the Church must be calibrated by being in the Spirit, in the Word, in community where questions are asked, insights shared, moving toward a common consensus of how we are to be in mission, in ministry in these days.

I take the words of Paul, to the Church at Ephesus, as a model of response. Notice, in the Second Lesson (Ephesians 1:15-23), how he enfolds a healthy Christian community.

1. Paul has heard of their witness. They TRUST the Lord Jesus Christ and show LOVE towards all the saints. No one left out, each met with humility and care, knowing that God is the one who gives courage;
2. Paul gives thanks (being with a compliment) following by saying "Thank YOU" and praying for one another. For wisdom!
3. Here is the connection to the miracle story---"with the eyes of your heart enlightened." Get it? A vision rooted in hope, to which we are called, rich, and immeasurable power to work in Christ.
4. The Christ who is the head of the church, which is his body "the fullness of him who fills all in all."

You are being called to Visioning Workshops with two unique aspects: to focus not on deficit, as in "If only we had..." but on the pathways which have led us to be one of the strongest congregations in our region...there is no predicament but a generous band of gifts which bond us more deeply to the call of God in Christ. To **seeing into**, if you will, what we already have as a congregation.

Then, to **seeing out of** our bedrock confession in Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and friend what we are becoming now and in the years ahead. A refraction of the eyes of our hearts made new, informing our feet, our hands, our lives to working toward discipleFITness.

It is both an individual and collective experience of not fitting into a box, but being freed to most of all DREAM as one a future in which we become a sanctuary of the kind of peace that only Christ can bring among a faithful community led by the Holy Spirit.

In these past days, I have been reflecting on what people are seeing and perceiving about our congregation. As we have celebrated the lives of Norma Wakeley and Yvonne Heuvig, with a visit with Jay Hagen, Bellevue's new Fire Chief, and with those who have shared about the power of our Ministry Team, especially the life changing ministry of Emily Harrow...I have heard again and again

you are viewed, how we are viewed as a place of action where we are viewed as solid in witness, accurate in mission, and a place where we witness to Jesus and sometimes use words! (after Saint Francis).

Beloved, visioning is not about something new, it is about recalibration on the dna of Jesus and the places where we are committed, risking, adapting and building the Body of Christ in this place and to the ends of the earth.

Vision is not new spectacles ...it must be about Be-living (Thank you Abbie!) and seeing clearly into the next generation of this congregation.

It must be rooted in Jesus as the center of our lives, our message, our actions, which brings us forward not from brokenness, incompleteness, but through the process of hearing the call of Christ and learning to respond "Here am I, send me!"

Sometimes I have the point of view that we live in a "let someone else do it" kind of world. That was not the way of the first followers of Jesus after Pentecost. Filled with the Holy Spirit and courage, without looking back to the good old, or not so, days, they looked and lived to the horizon with courage and confident hope that nothing, no-thing, could take from them the power that they had come to know and experience in Christ.

May it be so for you, for me, for us as we continue to move, growing forward, along the way. Blessed hearing and seeing!

In Jesus' name, may it be so, Amen!