



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



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

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 2, 2018

Tradition OR "Your call is important to us."

Mark 7:1-13

It is the pattern of Mark's Gospel to show Jesus on pace to the Cross. It is also a narrative which reorders the power of God in the world. Just prior to the words you just heard, "his plate is more than full" and He has fed the thousands (Pun intended ☺)

On the way, He calls and heals, teaches and calms the storm. Then, after being rejected in His hometown where "he could do no mighty works" and "marveled because of their unbelief." And He moved on.

But, the disciples moved out two by two to also teach, heal, anoint, and become THE PRESENCE OF THE ONE WHO CALLED THEM.

News came of the death of John the Baptist; apostles return and Jesus feeds the 5000 or so; walks on water; is found in Gentile country. And He comes face to face with TRADITION and CONFLICT with the religious establishment (Pharisees and legal experts, the Charter Members of THE PROMISE.)

The inquiry was at the center of what the mission of Jesus was all about---enfolding into the promise of a new way which led to reconciliation and LIFE.

First salvo set the scene: "Why don't your disciples/students follow the tradition of the elders?" And you can almost hear Tevya of Fiddler on the Roof cry out "TRADITION, TRADITION, TRADITION" which finally leaves him saying, "We don't know how it started, but because of our tradition, everyone one knows who they are and what God expects them to do." Tradition!

Do you know tradition? Which are the ones, the ONE, that keeps you together, us together? We have seen it these past days: two remembrances of life; one rooted in the Black Gospel traditions and one clearly on the foundation of state and military protocols. From spiritual to cadenced march of an honor guard.

We live traditions every single day---from morning traditions to evening get to bed patterns; we have communication traditions: Facebook, others Tweet, voicemail, email, text; and some of us just like to avoid "Your call is important to us" and get to a human voice. And I, for one, think that the "keep it short tradition" is a hedge to questions and conversations that bring clarity.

It was the purity tradition that hits Jesus in the face. They were in Gentile country; the Jewish tradition of keeping clean and clear seemed to be warfare, but it was meant to be care-fare---to see the teachings of Jesus as getting to the heart of what would have us to be in the day to day of our stewardship of life.

A good rabbi, Jesus began with Scripture with a twist: "Hypocrites (Not a good way to engage!), remember Isaiah, lips, hearts." In our understanding, "walking your talk."

Old ways can become twisted ways that bind instead of free up; confuse instead of making clear that true purity, true cleansing is not about rigid actions that intrude and exclude, but the truth of the heart that says "Don't just flip Mom or Dad a coin with the words 'here is quick donation from God.' and not care for them, honor them, cherish them."

You see Jesus wants to get to the inner life which is empowered by the Holy Spirit to be true observance. Not idle law keeping, but (in the writing of James) 1) being those born of God and 2) "quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger." To be those in whom are embedded the word of God that from within blossoms those who are called "doers of the word" and filled with courage that knows that out of the old ways (first covenant) comes new covenant promise of forgiveness and relationships like those we share in Christ alone!

Did you notice the change of seasonal traditions in the past 10 days? In case you missed it, school is in session, fall sports are Seahawk-ing us, discipleship life in this place is brewing and beginning anew that for the time being our "tradition" is finding a renewed relationship which is rooted in our worship and is not afraid to talk about the things of God---Word and prayer; sacramental living, sacrificial giving and living which is in all things giving honor to God, through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And, as I often remember we have our GPS, Gospel-Positioning System, in the Cross of Christ.

As fall unfolds, there will be many traditions which, like a siren call, warn us to many obstacles to overcome. Likely the worst, in my point of view, is to just do stuff---rather than live the life to which we are called to "cut through the bologna" that is often the breaking and developing news.

Jesus is at the Center and is leading us to keep a clear, healthy climate for ministry. A model for mission which knows that we are first of all in RELATIONSHIPS that are fed and kept in worship, witness, learning, service, and support.

Out of that climate comes vision and action which may well include listening and learning, but finds its deepest expression in dreaming how it is to live in times of change with confidence and courage; clarity and stability that trusts the God who calls us.

How is your inner life? What is your deepest sense of calling as you answer the challenge, opportunity to speak to who Jesus Christ is for YOU, for me, FOR US in each new day?

The Old Way is the NEW WAY too, fulfilled in our time. I sense a strong pattern in each of the readings on this Labor Day Weekend Sunday, our day of rest!

It is this: we are seeking to be a place rooting faith in a mobile and quick-fix culture! That is called to move into our life together, in the pace of Grace THAT TRUSTS GOD IN CHRIST WHO GOES BEFORE US, BIDS US INTO A FUTURE THAT IS GENEROUSLY GIVEN A NEW WAY, A NEW DAY, EACH AND EVERY DAY.

Therefore, let us be GROWING FORWARD, ONE IN CHRIST. In the name of the Father and of the Son and in the Holy Spirit, Amen!