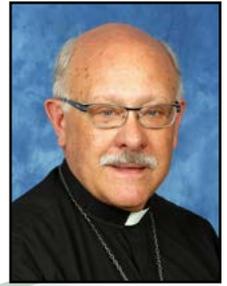




Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



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

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 7, 2018

Game Changer

Mark 10:13-16

Where were you on October 3rd, last Tuesday, at 11:18 a.m.? Do you recall? We had just finished Tuesday Morning Bible Study. I walked into my office, came close to sitting down when my, and other mobile devices began to sound an alarm.

My first thoughts were Amber Alert or Silver Alert, but it was disarming to hear the echoing tones. Finally, found my phone and read "Presidential Alert." Then, noticed "THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed." WHEW, NO ACTION IS NEEDED, but a moment I found myself disoriented, wondering how I would act IF action WAS needed.

Those who walked with Jesus in our Gospel portion had a similar call, but ACTION WAS NEEDED. And, for better or worse it had been, would be quit a ride.

Remember how quickly their lives had changed; literally dropped everything to follow Him. Mark used the word "immediately" time and again!

Ever wonder what they must have thought, must have felt? I have...the pace included ---

- ✠ times of rapid response to human need: unclean spirits expelled, the sick were healed, those who could not, walked;
- ✠ time of conflict: as He called tax collectors and came into times of argument with the holders of the "old way" and were beginning to see this Rabbi as a threat to their power;
- ✠ time of teaching in ways that seemed to carry truth with authority unlike others --- parables of sowing seeds, of abundance that nothing could stop the news shared that meant that God was a game changer

But, here, it seems to me, is the real point. Time and again, those who followed were numbered in the thousands with no social media. And Jesus was friending everybody! He fed them and they came to see that God was in the place where He was heard. And then, the telling of the new day when, even though one confessed him to be "Messiah, Anointed One,

SENT ONE that He would suffer rejection, be killed, but one day be raised from the dead.

I am struck anew that the response of the people was most amazing when they brought him little children that He might touch them.

But, the response of the ones who had been with Jesus from their calling moment, are seen to be frustrating the efforts of those who would bring the children. And Jesus soon changes up the norm of His way that invites acceptance as one would a child, those who are seen as vulnerable and powerless, but become the new wave as those who are embraced into newness of life in Christ and are called to be "C.O.G. Child of God!

Last week, you were asked "Why are you here?" What is it, I would, and in an ask; inquire "What keeps you, keeps us coming back?" Permit a thrust towards an answer---because we are called as those who continue to serve and thrive in witness to the Game Changer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In a defining study, one of my teachers of old (Herman Waetjen), called Mark's Gospel "A Reordering of Power."

While you might expect power that is institutional, corporate, well-defined, purpose driven, audited, and refined. We receive the opposite. Look to the children and see the kingdom of the heavenly Father, who sent his only Son, to be with us and for us, to forgive and redeem us that we might enfold others, enfold the world as we would a child.

I would hold that the action of Jesus must be the metronomic pace of those who witness to Jesus in our time, in this place amidst a world that seems too often be out of focus. (Note Breaking and Developing News each and every day!)

Hang around children lately? I have...they seem to be ready to learn, experience; unanxious, trusting, like to play...dependent as they grow through faith and life stages, seeking mentors to build them up, guide them out, stand beside them and to never let them go!

Which one of us would ignore the child, avoid them, walk around them, not insure their safety or deny them a place at the table? Not insure listening time, resting and resetting, teaching them compassion and model for them where language is soft and gentle, actions meant to give space and leave room to even make a mistake or two, or three?

I believe that Jesus is teaching us to be lovingly so for all of God's children. Those next to us this day (Look around and about you!) And those with whom we share community. For we have been spoken to by the Son of God, in Jesus that we might speak to one another in tones of grace, renewal, and life lived in reconciliation. That is to lift up, handle gently, and live blessing!

Pastor Paul Hoffman and I had a long lunch on Friday. Two pastors blessed to serve faith communities for a generation or two. And we reflected on the church our times. Often isolated, often failing, too often looking back, gazing intently into an isolated presence, and seeing only deficit in the future.

We came to a tentative insight: being about the work of the Holy Spirit is to rely on the pace of grace, not to plot or plan, but to live in the good news of Jesus who is the source of hope, fount of joy, maker of peace.

To keep our eyes ever on God, our hearts open to newness of life, to watch tongues, to curb abrupt action and to seek the way of Wisdom portrayed in our First Reading where the life of those called by Jesus to be game changers too is found in wisdom, words of insight, instruction with righteousness, justice, and equity; to listen deeply; and to know that the fear (confident trust in the Lord) is the beginning of all that we in the Church and through the congregation we love.

This is our focus in an often unfocused world. THIS LORD'S DAY OUR ALERT. ACTION NEEDED. TO RECEIVE. So we pray:

"GRACIOUS ONE, GOD WE KNOW AND ARE KNOWN IN JESUS, STILL US. HELP US TO SEE 20-20 INTO THE GIFT YOU HAVE GIVE TO US WITH FORGIVENESS, FREEDOM, AND EACH NEW DAY.

ETERNAL ONE, GIVE US THE FAITH OF A CHILD. SIMPLE AND CLEAR, CONFIDENT AND DEPENDENT IN KNOWING THAT WE DO NOT KNOW ALL THINGS, EXCEPT THAT YOU LIFT US UP, HOLD US, BLESS US AND FOREVER CALL US YOUR OWN DEAR CHILD, COG, CHILD OF GOD FOREVER. IN THE NAME OF JESUS, YOUR SON, OUR BROTHER ALONG THE WAY. ONE WITH US FOREVER, CHANGELESS, PRINCE OF PEACE. AMEN.