

Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church- 9/23/2018

Text Mark 9:30-37

Did You Ask Good Questions Today?

Grace and peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, they are on the road again. That is, the disciples with Jesus. Actually, it's been about three years that they have been on the road with Jesus. They watched and listened as Jesus taught, healed, performed miracles, and did their share of being his support staff. Somebody was probably the chief cook as well. If I was one of the disciples, I would have thought that it was a neat gig. And also, that this was exactly what would happen for years to come. Wouldn't you?

But last week, as some of you heard - most didn't. It was Labor Day weekend and we had less of you hearing the Gospel. But to recap, last week Jesus gives an announcement of the future. Actually, he throws them a bombshell, even more than the book, Fear, by Bob Woodward. Jesus says, "I'm going to Jerusalem and I'm going to be killed but I will rise again". Peter, along with the other disciples respond with something like, 'don't talk like that. We can't allow that to happen.'

So this week, Jesus takes another shot at it. They again are walking through the region of Galilee, by the lake of the same name. For us it would be like being up North. So again, Jesus says, "I'll be killed and rise again in three days". I would imagine that this made the disciples nervous and anxious so they begin to discuss other stuff. Stuff like who is the most important disciple. Not unusual. We do the same thing. When we get uncomfortable we change the subject. We start to talk about the weather, or how the Packers will destroy Washington today.

There was one line in our text this morning that speaks volumes for us. "But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him." Nobody asked him why he had to die. Nobody asked him how he was going to rise again. Nobody asked what is to become of us. Nada. Nothing asked.

This is most interesting given the fact that they are Jews. That's pretty much all that Jewish people do - ask questions. In the Synagogues on Saturday mornings, asking questions of the Rabbis and teachers was the norm. When families celebrate the Passover, the youngest child always takes on the role of the

questioner. When the candles are lit, and the unleavened bread is eaten, and the bitter herbs are passed around, it is the youngest child who is trained to ask, "Why do we do this Papa?" And then Papa teaches the family about the Exodus and Faith in general. And did you notice in the text what Jesus does at the end. He takes a small child in his arms, hugs him tightly, and then says that this child is an example of His kingdom. A child who always asks questions, a child who is always wondering. A child who is always curious and seeking answers. Be like a child, Jesus says.

A Story - you know I love stories. I was in the 8th grade. The year before I was set to attend Brooklyn Technical High School, one of three high schools in the Big Apple where one gained admission by a standardized test. A majority of the incoming students would be of the Jewish faith. That was because they were the smart, good students. I figured out early on that modeling their behavior was a good thing to do. Especially if I was to make it at this high school for gifted students. So, I spent some time after school with Muriel. A few reasons for this. Muriel's Mom always had great food after school as a treat. Lox and Bagels. Also, because Muriel was very smart. And lastly, because Muriel was simply gorgeous. Remember I was 14.

On these occasions, Grandpa Abe was usually present. This was a Conservative Jewish Family. Which means they kept Kosher (food stuff), always worshipped, and had regular prayers through the day and often spoke Yiddish. Not Orthodox Jews but close to it. When Muriel and I arrived at the apartment, Grandpa Abe would expound on some nugget but almost always in Yiddish. Norwegian I knew and could speak, but Yiddish only curse words. On one occasion I asked Grandpa Abe what he just said in Yiddish and he smiled and looked at me and said, "Ask a question and you are a fool for three minutes, don't ask a question and you are a fool for a lifetime". Then he turned to Muriel and said, "So Muriel, did you ask good questions today?" Not how was school? But did you ask good questions today. I have kept that tradition alive in my life. When I see the grandchildren after school, like Grandpa Abe, I ask, did you ask good questions today.

Which leads me to me and you. And some things to ponder.

What if I had asked more questions in my life?

When I was in Physics class, what if I had asked what meaning does Planks Constant have for me? (6.62×10^{-34} joules per second.)

Maybe then I would have understood Quantum theory.

When I was in seminary, when I never asked “how does one become a good Pastor when one knows he has clay feet?”

Why are some days so tough and filled with tragedies?

What is my purpose here?

You get the idea. All of us could be asking God questions which always brings us closer to God.

So let's do an exercise. Cheryl has provided you with a sheet of paper in the bulletin. It simply says My Questions to God. I want you to take a few moments and write your questions. Then put the sheet of paper in the offering plate. I will read every one, ponder every question and pray about your question. And hopefully in the months to come while I am still your Interim Pastor, I will engage these questions in a homily.

The disciples were afraid to ask and lost time and focus. The more we ask the closer we will be to God! As Grandpa Abe said. Did you ask good questions today? Amen- Let it be so

(Pastor gives the congregation some time to write the questions on the sheet provided.)