

Afraid to ask, afraid to hear Mark 9:30-37 18th Sunday after Pentecost Sep. 23, 2018

[Jesus] was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. Mark 9:31-32 they were afraid to ask, afraid to hear

Dear friends in Christ, have you ever had a cough that didn't seem like a big deal, but it just didn't go away? You hardly noticed it at first and you were sure it would take care of itself, but it continues for days and weeks and maybe months? And when you think about going in, you don't quite know if you want them to find something or find nothing. You aren't sure which one would be worse. And maybe its best just to ignore it another week, give it a chance to get better on its own. And besides, we have plans this week and next week the kids need us. And what about the time and money and expense if they do find something. You really don't want to see the results, so you do everything you can to avoid finding out? You are afraid to ask the question because you are afraid to hear the answer. So you keep quiet, and hope not knowing gives better results. Then maybe it is still nothing, not the big C. Not a life or a death far different than you imagine.

Jesus was teaching his disciples, and he taught them that the son of man would be delivered into the hands of men and killed and rise. We know what he is saying. That Jesus would go to the cross, and die for our sins, and rise that we may have life. The best news ever, and it doesn't seem to get much clearer. But the disciples don't understand. What is more, they don't try to. They are afraid to ask and afraid to hear.

Jesus doesn't just speak about rising. The disciples are ready to hear about rising. They expect Jesus to usher in the kingdom of God. They expect his kingship his glory, and their own with him. But he speaks about death first, and they don't want to know. They'd rather argue about who is great. So they miss the kingdom, because they are afraid to hear.

But then again, we aren't that different. God's word goes out today, calling sinners to repentance, calling them to turn to Christ. We talk about football and how big the harvest is or is going to be. We talk about how we spend our days and what we watch on TV. Hey, I talk about running times. We talk about who and what is great. People are hungry and hurting, needing physical help. But even more, they need God. Neighbors are dying because they do not hear the word of God. And we argue about and talk about who is great. Jesus tells us life comes after the cross, and we are afraid to ask about the cross. We don't want to hear about who dies, because it might be those we care about. It might be those Jesus tells to pick up their cross and follow him. It might be us. So we tell ourselves that what we have is great, and ignore the cross. But when we do, we miss the kingdom.

People die because they don't go to the doctor. They die when they don't get a tumor out. We have a tumor of sin. How many have to die because we'd rather not talk about it, because we are scared or busy or don't want to hear the cost?

Yet the testimony does not end at the cross. On the third day he rises. He who is God himself Goes to the cross for his children to serve them, and on the third day he rises. He serves all, even going to the cross, to give life to all who receive him.

And he shows the disciples this. He takes a child in his arms, and tells them that any who receive a child in his name receive him and the father who sent him. He shows that serving is receiving children. Hungry children, crying children, children in need of care and hugs and life.

We know such people. Some who are actually children, who need us to take care of their bottles and diapers but just as surely need to be received into Jesus arms - through baptism, through hearing God's word at home, in Sunday school and elsewhere in their life. Some are older and might not need so much physical care but still need to be in Jesus' arms. And some of them are us. The life Jesus won at the cross is for them and for you. Receive it.

And if you have failed, confess your sin. Let the old Adam die with Christ at the cross, and receive the life he wins.

We'll close with a challenge. Find one child who needs to Christ to receive them and introduce them. Maybe it is you, and you need to see Christ in his words, in devotion and bible study. Maybe its a child you can take to Sunday school. Maybe its a neighbor you can visit and tell about Jesus. Don't wait an make something else great in your life. Ask and hear. Let Christ be great in you. Amen.