

Discussing

Mark 9:2-10

February 11, 2018

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

This is transfiguration Sunday. Transfiguration Sunday is the last Sunday in Epiphany—the season of light. It is always the Sunday before Ash Wednesday—the beginning of Lent. Lent ends with the crucifixion of Jesus. Then comes resurrection.

Our text says that the disciples were discussing what “rising from the dead” meant. How do you think those discussions went?

Our text begins with, “After six days....” Peter confessed that Jesus is the Savior. On this confession the Church is built. Jesus then began to teach that he would suffer and die and rise. He then invited any who wanted to go with him to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him. He then said that there were some in the crowd who would not taste death until they saw the kingdom of God come with power. It was six days after this.

Peter, James, and John went with Jesus up a high mountain. It was just the four of them. Jesus was transfigured. To be transfigured means to be transformed into something more beautiful and exalted. Jesus’ clothes became dazzling white. It was a kind of white no one has ever seen...because Mark said Jesus’ clothes became whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. This was an amazing sight. Then there were six people. Peter, James, John, and Jesus were joined by Moses and Elijah.

Peter, motivated by ignorance and fear, offered to build three shelters...one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He thought it was good for them to be there. Of course, it was good. Peter, James, and John...Jews. They saw Moses the lawgiver and Elijah the great prophet. They

had confessed Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets. Could it really get any better than that? To top it off, they heard the voice of God. “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

And just like that, they found themselves alone with Jesus. Jesus gave them orders. He told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until he had risen from the dead. Now, they eventually did tell folks because we just read about it. But the reason Jesus wanted them to initially keep quiet was they didn’t yet fully comprehend what they had witnessed. They would be unable to explain it adequately. But after Jesus did rise from the dead...then they knew...then they understood.

So they kept the matter to themselves. But they did talk about what “rising from the dead” might mean. You see, if they did not yet understand what rising from the dead meant, then they were in no position to try and talk about the transfiguration.

The disciples were puzzled. Again, they were Jews. As Jews, they were aware that there would be this general resurrection of the dead. The ancient rabbis taught that at the end of days—the end of the age—the dead would be brought back to life...only those who were righteous. But Jesus seemed to hint at something beyond that.

So before we jump into the season of Lent, let’s consider a thing or two about resurrection. You know, Lent consists of forty days...right? That’s forty week days. Sundays do not count as days in Lent. The reason for this is Sundays are considered—for lack of a better term—mini Easters. Sunday is resurrection day. Most of the very earliest followers of Jesus were Jews. Those Christian Jews still observed the Sabbath, which

was Saturday. But they also met on Sunday, the Lord's Day, the day of resurrection.

So the three of them talked about this resurrection deal. What might they have discussed? I have no idea. They were confused, I'm sure. So I'll say a thing or two now...and I believe we will come back to this in, oh, about seven or eight weeks.

The resurrection? It just validates everything...everything. In First Corinthians Paul wrote that if Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our faith is useless. He further wrote that if only for this life we have hope in Jesus, then we are to be pitied. But Jesus did rise from the dead. That means everything Jesus said is true.

I meditated this past week on last week's youth-led service. Powerful service. In the grown-up's moment we learned that God protects us. Taylor used her story—and the story of David and Goliath—to talk about facing giants. Something Paul wrote to the Philippians was mentioned. Paul told them that he could do all things through Christ who gave him strength.

Then I thought of something Jesus said. The sixteenth chapter of John. It was in the upper room. Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples. He washed their feet. He talked of the new covenant. He told his disciples he was going away. He further told them they could not go with him. He did promise he would come back. He told them they would experience sorrow...pain. But he assured them their pain would turn to joy. They would see him again and they would experience great joy and no one would be able to rob them of that joy. The last thing he told them before he left for the Garden of Gethsemane was, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

You know what happened next? Jesus went and got himself arrested. He was beaten and killed. I'm sure to the disciples...seeing Jesus hanging from that cross...well, he did not look like he had overcome anything. They went and hid. They were afraid. They surely did not feel like they could overcome much.

Oh...but then Jesus rose from the dead. That proved the cross worked. It worked. It also proves that everything Jesus said is true. Our faith is not useless. Do not ever think it is useless to have faith. Jesus said—and continues to say to us—that he has overcome the world. John wrote in his first letter, "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

There are some who know that "okay" is one of my favorite words. Those of you who are fans of the wonderful TV show "This Is Us" know that was a big word in this past week's episode. It is a simple word. Not an overly powerful one. Okay. Simple. But here's the deal. No matter what happens in this world—and I mean no matter what...no matter what happens to me...no matter what...I will be okay. I will. We who make the decision to deny ourselves and take up our own cross and follow Jesus...we will be okay. Why am I convinced of this? Jesus overcame the world. His resurrection proves that.

Peter, James, and John were a bit confused by what Jesus said. They discussed what "rising from the dead" meant. They would soon pin all their hopes on that truth.

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