

Sermon

February 28, 2021 Lent 2

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In today's world, the need to speak of God, religion and faith is on that is best kept to oneself list. We see it throughout our lives, but you cannot speak of God in the workplace, unless you are a Pastor, without the fear of being called into the HR Office. We cannot send flyers out to youth in the schools about our VBS or youth programs because it might offend a parent. To even say a prayer before a meal at a public meeting can be met with great restrictions. Even Chaplains in hospitals must keep a generic role as to their faith traditions if it is a public supported hospital. Why do we have to be quiet about sharing God's good news for all people? What is a congregation to do to get the word out about Christ?

Jesus gives us some great example in today's Gospel reading. Yet first, he needs to get the Disciples back on track and not falling into what society is limiting them to do. When Jesus rebukes Peter with a line made famous in a Saturday Night Live sketch about the 'Church Lady'. 'Get behind me Satan'. It wasn't Jesus calling Peter Satan rather it was to shock Peter and the fellow disciples back to the message Jesus was sharing. The Disciples were falling into the "safe zone" that the leaders in Jesus' time wanted and not this new message that was causing a stir in communities and upsetting the balance of the religious elders. Are we today, falling into that "safe zone" when it comes to sharing God's message?

A bit of a "bunny trail", this is the first time Jesus lays out in public his future ..that he will be killed for his message and the foreshadowing of the cross. This is the first time he mentions in public that he is the Son of God. He is telling of the great sacrifice he will be making for all of us by his death and resurrection. Were the people listening?

The one verse that stands out to me is "If any wants to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." This one verse sums up what it will take and takes today to be a faith filled follower of Christ.

A choice needs to be made to be a follower of Christ. We cannot be part way in or stay in the "safe zone". One question that is asked a lot in my minister world is, how do we get more people in our churches? We see the big churches grow. We see the "non-denominational church expand and build new facilities. Why are they growing? (Insert- story of boys being asked to come to church)

We don't deny our comfort and tell people about our faith. We keep our faith close and don't share. Think about the last time one of your friends asked you to come to their church for worship or an event? The need to get out of our safe zone is the way we can spread that message. Jesus tells us that in today's reading. Is it really that hard? I bet all of you are ready, willing, and able to share your passion for the Packers, Badgers or Brewers. Right? We wear our teams logos everywhere, and no body seems to mind, it is not unusual. (Insert- Restaurant collar story from Peosta)

Wearing our faith on the outside and picking up our cross is what we are asked to do. It has nothing to do with fancy music and light shows nor does it have anything to do with how many coffee stations we have in our lobbies. It is very simple, share Gods good news. Period. We don't need to hide it.

Asking someone to come to church or a faith event is a great way to share God's message. How about giving someone a devotional booklet? Leading a prayer or grace at your next club or team gathering?

It is up to all of us to make God and faith a priority in a world that is in great need of it. We do great things here at St. Jacobi, our bunny and Santa breakfast, cookie walk, rummage sale. We give to the food pantries and make and collect hats and gloves. We are living out the helping others. Yet do we invite people to join us on a faith journey? Or are we afraid we might offend someone if we ask?

Jesus did not care about causing a bit of turmoil spreading his message. He kept at it talking to everyone. He was teaching his disciples to keep the focus on the message rather than making others feel comfortable. Sticking with the message and sharing it far and wide is what we are called to do.

Lent is that time when we look at our faith life and how can we refine and share God's message. What can go wrong with sharing love and grace? Will you pick up your cross and follow?