

There are many reasons why we are here this morning.

We are here because we believe God. We are here because we believe Jesus is our savior and lord. We are here because we can meet God through the Holy Spirit. God is here and God wants our presence on this day; God wants our worship; God wants our praises; that's why we are here.

But more importantly, we are here because we need God more than God needs us. We all need help; we all need God's mercy; we all need God's comfort; we all need God's power; we all need God's wisdom.

I hope everyone feels filled with the Spirit of God as we continue to worship. I want you to be well and happy; I want all of us to be uplifted; more importantly, I want all of us to become different people when we leave this place—at least, more hopeful and more faithful than we came.

Among other things, the Christian Church has a very specific reason to exist. I believe that is evangelism.

We need to let the world know about God's love.

We need to let the world know who Jesus is.

It is very simple and clear.

But, in today's Gospel lesson, Jesus told his people not to talk about him.

Verse 30 says "Jesus warned them to tell no one about Him."

*The Message*, which is a contemporary paraphrased translation, says, "Jesus warned them to keep it quiet, not to breathe a word of it to anyone."

Does that mean no evangelism in church? Why keep it a secret?

But it is not just Mark's Gospel. Both Matthew and Luke have the

same stories.

Jesus says to his disciples "Who do they say I am?" The answer was: They said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, you are one of the prophets that has come back."

"Ok," says Jesus, "then, who do think I am?"

And all of Matthew, Mark, and Luke report that Jesus told them to keep it a secret when Peter said, "You are the Christ; You are the Messiah!" (Mt. 16:20; Lk. 9:21).

Of course, we know they didn't keep it a secret. They went the opposite way.

Had they followed Jesus' command, maybe, we would not have the church in the world. At least, the kind of church we have now!

But here is Mark's point.

The reason why Jesus told his boys not to tell about him was

Not because he thought he was not the Messiah

But because he wanted to let them know that he was not the kind of Messiah they had been expecting him to be.

Identifying their teacher as the Messiah, the guys thought, being his followers meant they were going to have big success in the world;

They thought they would be granted all the honor and glory people could imagine.

But Jesus told them over and over they were called to serve, not to be served; they were to lower themselves, not to get higher.

Instead of getting all you wanted, Jesus said, you might end up losing your lives, if you really want to follow me!"

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Speaking of this, I am reminded of an incident that I remember from 30 years ago. I was attending a Wednesday evening service at my small Methodist church in Korea. I do not remember all the details of sermon that evening. But the pastor was kind of talking about Christian discipleship—bearing a cross, sacrificing aspects of our lives etc.

You know how it goes.

People want to hear something good and something exciting. After working all day, here they are at the church listening to this demanding word from the preacher. It wasn't fun.

No wonder. All of a sudden, I saw one of the key members of the church raise his hand saying,

“Pastor, if the Gospel is about what you just said, I want to quit.”

Wow. The whole church became silent. I don't know what the pastor did to him afterwards. What I know is that he did not quit the church.

Yes, the Gospel is demanding.

Many times we do not understand it fully; many times we can't find answers to questions, especially we face challenges in our lives.

Friday evening, I had to go to San Jose to see my cousin's brother-in-law. He was in coma for a week; on top of his existing Huntington Disease, he had brain damage from falling. The shocking story was that he was the 7<sup>th</sup> person going through this genetic disorder out of 9 siblings. It was tough; I just didn't know what to say to the family.

Life is full of mysteries; we struggle with many issues including many theological issues.

In that respect, Mark's Gospel is very honest and upfront about what the disciples went through.

It just says they just didn't get it.

And many times, neither do we.

Because I am a minister and professor at a seminary, you think I may know better than some of you. No.

We are on the same journey-- learning and growing all the time.

Jesus' disciples did not fully understand what Jesus meant when he was talking about discipleship and meaning of life.

It is ok not to understand all; it is ok not to have all the answers; it is totally normal or even healthier to have more questions than right answers.

But here is the Good News, though.

In Mark's Gospel, the disciples do not get it; they misunderstand Jesus; they even betray, forsake or deny him. But Jesus never gives up on them.

Mark says, Jesus continues to teach them, to correct their misunderstandings, and to empower them for the work he believes they will do.

Finally, the final message from his empty tomb is that Jesus wants his disciples back; the disciples may have left Jesus, but he never left them. (Mark Powell, *The Gospels*, 58)

No wonder the disciples came back to Jesus and they became Jesus' real apostles.

The same thing is true for all of us: we have this relationship with Jesus.

No matter what, this relationship is (and always has been) sustained by his faithfulness, not ours.

Praise the Lord, that is why we are here and that is why we need to tell the world about him.

"Don't Tell Them?" Mark 8:27-38; 9/13/2009; Albany UMC

**Evangelism continues; church continues. Amen.**