

SEPTEMBER 22-23

THIS IS WEEK 3 OF OUR MESSAGE SERIES CALLED "BE OPEN to Journey with Jesus"

- The first week we heard about the deaf and mute person
 - Who is brought to Jesus for healing
 - And through his encounter with Jesus
 - Has his hearing and speech restored
 - Restored to the way God intends for all of us
 - We spoke about how we may be deaf or blind or mute before God
 - And how a personal encounter with Jesus can bring healing and wholeness to us as well
- Last week we asked the question: Who do you say Jesus is?
 - Jesus asked this question and Peter responds that he is the Christ
 - Which is the correct answer
 - But what was missing was: What does it mean to be the Christ?
 - This left us asking ourselves who is Jesus to us?
 - Not just knowing facts about him
 - Such as his birthday or his parents' names
 - But really coming to know the person Jesus Christ, the son of God
 - Coming to know this good news about his death and resurrection
 - Coming to experience his gift of salvation for us
 - And therefore knowing of God's love and mercy for us
- Our goal is that we want to really know him personally, intimately, lovingly
 - And not just know things about him
 - But to desire to be in a personal relationship with him
 - As his friends and his disciples

THIS WEEK WE HEAR ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HIS DISCIPLES

- And ask ourselves how OPEN are we to living our Christian discipleship
 - In spite of the challenges we will most definitely face
 - And maybe even are facing as we confront the sins of our Church
- The Gospel begins pretty much where we left off last week
 - With Jesus once again trying to teach his disciples
 - What must happen to him
 - In order for The Father's will to be done
 - He says the Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise."
 - And once again they did not understand
 - What he was saying to them
 - Because, let's face it
 - On the surface it may not make complete sense to those who hear it
 - First their image of the Christ
 - Is not one who would suffer and die
 - Second they don't understand what it means to rise

- As in from the dead in the resurrection
 - Jesus' explanation left them with more questions than answers
 - And for some of us here today
 - It continues to confound us
 - And maybe even challenge us
 - Because it doesn't seem to make sense
 - From our worldly and earthly perspective
 - I don't particularly like to suffer
 - Especially suffering through the fallout of the abuse and leadership crisis
- But suffering and sacrifice are in some sense at the center of our faith
 - Our belief that God's son, Jesus Christ, was born into our world, and suffered and died and was raised, so that we may have new life, and come to experience God's grace and mercy.
 - Billions of people have professed this faith through the centuries
 - And millions have suffered and died because of it
- And in spite of that
 - We continue to call it the Good News of Jesus Christ

WHEN WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN THIS CHURCH EACH WEEK

- I think we can safely assume that each one of us who is here
 - Believes, more or less, in what we just heard about Jesus Christ
 - Because if we did not, then we probably would not be here
- But when this hour is over
 - And we walk out the church doors and enter back into the secular world
 - There are absolutely no guarantees that everyone we meet
 - Will not only believe this as well concerning Jesus
 - But also will live their lives as witness to what they believe
- When we are sent forth into the world
 - We are being sent to make this proclamation to everyone we meet
 - Not only by our actions but also by our words
 - And yet I would guess most if not all of us are at times
 - Hesitant to take up this mission
 - This mission to be missionary disciples of Jesus
 - We are not open to it
 - Maybe out of fear
 - Maybe out of a lack of knowledge about Jesus
 - Maybe thinking it is not my job – its only Fr Steve's job
- But for whatever reason
 - The consistent call of Jesus to us is to be open to proclaiming his good news
 - Because if we don't
 - Then Jesus' passion and death were done in vain
 - Jesus can only continue to accomplish his mission
 - By our willing proclamation of his mission
 - And our desire to live our lives as witnesses to his mission

- In our thoughts, words, deeds and actions

AND GUESS WHAT – WE ALREADY KNOW

- There will be challenges if we really agree to do this work of missionary disciples
 - There will be people who will reject us
 - Or hate us or curse at us
- As we heard in the first reading from the Book of Wisdom that said
 - There are wicked people in the world who would want nothing more
 - Than to trip us up and watch us fail
 - The scribes and the Pharisees did the same thing to Jesus
 - There will be people willing to revile us and even torture us
 - Even imprison us and maybe even put us to death
 - As had happened to most of the apostles and early church leaders
 - We can be guaranteed that life may not be so easy
 - Especially as the world continues to become more secularized
 - And more and more people do not know Jesus
 - Or are closed off to his message and his gift of new life
 - Or have lost sight or lost faith in what Jesus has done for us
 - And continues to do for us

WE ARE ASKED NOT ONLY TO BE OPEN TO THE GOOD NEWS OF Jesus CHRIST

- But maybe more importantly
 - BE OPEN to embracing the challenges of following Jesus
 - Knowing that there will be challenges
 - But still be open to proclaiming his Good News by our words and our deeds
 - Because our world is thirsting for something more
 - They just don't know that it is God
 - And they won't know unless we share the Good News with them

SO THIS WEEK I WOULD ASK US TO TRY SOMETHING THAT MAY CHALLENGE US

- I ask you to try just one time this week
 - To share your Good News of Jesus Christ with someone you know
 - Share with someone when and how Jesus touched your heart
 - Or changed your life
 - Maybe practice your testimony beforehand
 - On someone who is here at Church today
 - Or maybe even choose someone you know who won't persecute you or insult you or throw rocks at you for doing it
 - But choose someone who needs to hear the message of hope
- Because this message is not just for me or for you
 - This news about Jesus is for everyone
 - For it is truly Good News for all of humanity
- So do not be afraid to share your faith with someone else this week
 - And BE OPEN embracing the challenges of following Jesus