

## **Homily - Sept 5, 23rd Sunday.**

We are in the middle of a few weeks in which our Second Reading comes from the Letter of Saint James. This is a good time to reread the whole letter. It is only five chapters long, so it could be read in one sitting. The letter is filled with concrete advice that is as good today as it was back then. Read and Enjoy.

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In the Gospel According to Mark, we are at point in the book where a change is going to take place. In the Introductory Comments to Mark in the New American Bible, we are given a possible outline to the structure of the gospel.

It puts most of the first half of the book, including this week's reading, under the heading of "THE MYSTERY OF JESUS." Miracles and healings and teachings with an authority that people had not experienced before are happening around and because of Jesus. He is presenting a love and call to repentance that people are noticing. And they are finding that they need to make a choice about Him. They are encountering someone who might be the long-awaited Messiah.

Starting next week, the outline headings indicate that the last half of Mark's gospel is about Revealing the Mystery of Christ.

In other words, Our Lord begins to tell them that He is the Messiah, and what His mission entails.

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Today, Our Lord cures a man who cannot hear or speak. This is an action that refers to all of us disciples. When we are touched by Christ, we also are freed up to truly listen to God's word. We also are freed to proclaim Him to the world. We also are freed to bring others to Jesus.

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And then Jesus says something that seems contrary to what he has just done. We are told in today's gospel that:

"He ordered them not to tell anyone."

When Christ does this in the gospels, it is often referred to as the “Messianic Secret.” Our Lord is revealing slowly who He is. But those who hear this too early are not prepared for what it really means that He is the Messiah. They may think He is only a political ruler. They have not yet understood that He is greater than the Law or the Temple. So they are told to not say anything yet.

One commenter on this passage simply points out that:

*“Jesus has power to control the forces of nature, disease, and evil spirits, but the Lord respects our free will and does not force us to do His will. Rather, the Lord opens our ears to hear Him and asks us to willingly cooperate with His will, especially when it conflicts with our own desires.*

*Disciples are called to be obedient to God’s will and to do what God wants rather than what they want. It is in our obedience that the gift of faith reaches perfection and we use the gifts God has given us according to the Lord’s intention.”*

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This passage, then, presents us with what seems to be a paradox. We have been given new ears and tongues. So we are expected to use them. We greatly desire to share what we have received. We as disciples are called by Christ to continue to hear Him, and proclaim Him to the world.

But we are to seek His desires, that we may be effective in sharing His Kingdom with others.

The Crowds brought the man to Jesus. Someone, or many people, brought us to Jesus. We are called to bring others to Him as well. If that seems like a tall order, even after all our years with Him, then we also need to listen to His guidance, and proclaim His wonders.

This is not the beginning of Christ’s ministry. This is no longer the time for the “Messianic Secret.” We are expected to proclaim Him today.

And we still find wisdom and courage to do this when we come to Him daily in prayer and love.

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This is another quote from a Scripture Scholar:

*Remember: The man in this story would have never come to Jesus had it not been for the crowd. Jesus wants us to use our gift of speech to invite others so they can share in what we are already experiencing. The gift of faith and discipleship is deeply personal but never intended to be kept private.*

*This ends with questions worth our pondering this week as we consider how to proclaim Christ:*

*Who introduced you to Jesus?*

*Who has been placed in your life and needs to meet the Lord, but they aren't aware of their need or don't know how to meet Him?*

*What are opportunities or ministries to which you can invite people so they can become familiar with the Lord?*