

Children's sermon (rich/poor)

(Nothing) ventured, nothing gained. Do any of you live your life like that? Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Maybe it was how you made whatever investments you could to prepare for retirement. Maybe it was taking a chance asking for a promotion or a raise at work. If anything, nothing ventured, nothing gained was a significant part of your love life. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

So, how does that sit with your life of faith? When it comes to your confidence in God's grace, or Jesus' call are you a nothing ventured nothing gained kind of person, or do you lean back and say, "Hey, I'm baptized and confirmed, I have arrived." I pray not. See, we don't call this a life of faith for nothing.

(James) lays it clearly upon each of us....if you say you have faith, let me see how you are invested in it. (Nothing) ventured, nothing gained. That goes for study, that goes for serving on a team; that goes for inviting family and friends to join in this journey of New Spirit's life. James is a challenge for (lots of) "baptized and confirmed" Lutherans because he doesn't give much weight to "by faith alone." In fact, James says that if we claim the grace and mercy of God, we'd better be (feeding) the hungry, and welcoming the homeless, and venturing in our daily life to get more in touch with the Spirit of God.....powerfully present in each of our lives right now! Remember, (nothing) ventured, nothing gained.

(Jesus) booked a room on AirBnB on the beach in Tyre, way north of Israel. He went there for a rest; to regroup; for a sabbatical. He figured if he stayed in someone's house he'd be more invisible than if he checked into a hotel. The house he stayed in was a block from the beach...but the moment he stepped out to take a walk on the beach....a (woman) starts her thing. "O Jesus!" It's like going to San Diego and sitting down for breakfast (at the) Mission in Pacific Beach, when from the next booth comes your obnoxious neighbor's voice..."well, look who is here!" Get me outta here!

(Mark) tells us clearly this woman is a gentile, a nobody. Well yah, Jesus is the alien there. He's in her neighborhood. This woman has a (teenage) daughter with some issues. Mom steps way out of the rules of appropriateness when (she) speaks directly to him...in public....asking him for his help. (Nothing) ventured, nothing gained. Is that a big deal?

Now Mark's audience (expects) the end-of-time, the Day of the Lord any moment now. Their attitude toward women was classic male-dominance, and their attitude toward Gentiles was equally bad. For Mark's readers, this was a perfect opportunity for the Son of David to do what? Put this woman in her place. You'd think.

(Lord,) my daughter has a demon. I believe you can heal her. Lord, you are all that I need. (If this) was Luke's Gospel, Jesus would have said....take me to her! If this was John's Gospel, Jesus would have said DONE, God has done this. But in Mark, Jesus gets snarky. He refers to (her as).... a dog. Some people want to soften Jesus words saying he called her a "puppy dog"...but that would be an incorrect translation. Dogs in that day were not pets. They were scavengers... totally unwelcome in most houses...and Mark's Jesus uses the derogatory term for a female (dog)....you little b_____, I've come to feed the children of Israel....

Jesus the non- (dualist)-thinker? Jesus the transformational-faith guy? Do you see it? It is not a very nice picture. But, and there's always a but....the woman stands her ground. And there is a short, but deep pause....("even) the b____ get crumbs from the children's table."

Was she (right?) She was! Begrudgingly Jesus declares her daughter freed. End of story? Not quite. In Mark these stories come in two's.

After his airbnb weekend, Jesus goes back home to Galilee. He meets a man who was deaf, who had a speech impediment. If you (can't hear), you can't speak. If you don't hear, you don't speak. Do you see where this might go? This man represents the church, or the nation of Israel.

What is their problem? (They) cannot hear. As Jews they would have heard God's promises since they were children.....but....they cannot hear. If they cannot hear the word of God, how can they ever act in concert with their faith. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

I don't think things have changed very much in these past 2,000 years. I think we, Lutheran Christians, still can't or don't hear....because we have earbuds, and cell phones, spotify and Netflix. We have a host of noises wanting to gain our attention, and if we are tuned into any one of them, then we may not hear the voice of God calling us, like James calls us. If we say "I'm Christian" then how is that shown in your life? Going to church doesn't make you Christian. What makes us Christian is our reliance on the call of God (to "do) whatever it takes!" Martin Luther may be spinning in his grave, because he is misquoted as the "faith alone" guy. I believe Luther would want you to understand this: you will know the power of blessing through grace, yes, and more... in your participation.... entering the (struggle) of that woman. We enter that struggle because of our confident faith that we will bless her....by our presence....when we are willing to ask God (to come) and fill the empty space within us....because the Lord is all that I need.

(There) are 50 sermons woven in the two readings we heard today...and I could go on with a least 3 or 4 just this morning. But I'll offer these four words for your days to come:

(Nothing) ventured, nothing gained. Amen.

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