

# **"Pride Opens Mouths that Should Be Closed, and Closes Mouths that Should Be Opened"**

Text: Mark 9:30-37

Grace, mercy and peace be yours from our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Have you ever wished that your mouth had some sort of automatic retrieval function? Something along the lines of the "five second rule" for dropped food or the "seven second rule" that the FCC requires for live broadcasts. The answer is of course you have. Pretty much everyone over the age of about newborn has allowed ill-advised words to fall out of their mouths – words that they instantly wish they could somehow retrieve or un-say. Somehow just reel them back in like an errant cast. You can almost see them just floating there in the air right in front of you, and yet you know there is absolutely nothing you can do to un-speak them. The best we can do is the "I'm sorry, I didn't mean that" or "Wait. That came out wrong."

And then, not to be undone, there are all those times when you relive a conversation in your head and lament the fact that you didn't say what you could and should have. Sometimes that sort of thing is the result of the silly idea that you would have "won" the argument if only you had said... Other times it's because you only later thought of something that might have really benefitted the person that needed your help.

What all of this teaches us is that, as a general rule, our mouths tend to be open when they should be closed and closed when they should be open. Our text for this morning, along with our Scripture readings, guide us to a better understanding of just why that is, along with what we can do to correct the problem going forward. That text is found in the Gospel of Mark, the Ninth Chapter:

ESV **Mark 9:30-37** *They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know,* <sup>31</sup> *for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."* <sup>32</sup> *But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.* <sup>33</sup> ¶ *And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"* <sup>34</sup> *But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.*

<sup>35</sup> *And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."* <sup>36</sup> *And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them,* <sup>37</sup> *"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."*

This is God's Word - words God himself has given us for our instruction, growth, and comfort. Always approach God's Word with the awe and reverence it deserves. God is speaking directly to you. So also we pray, "**Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!**" Amen.

Our text sets the stage with these words: ***They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples.*** Really interesting words when you stop to think about them. There truly is "a time and a place" isn't there. Jesus spent his entire life in the service of others. Even when physically and mentally exhausted, he always seemed to sum up the strength to tend to the needs of the crowds. The preceding verses in Mark 9 told of crowds and their demands on Jesus, and in Mark 10 how after the events of our text he went to Judea and the crowds again pressed in around him. But not this time. This time he struggled to remain both anonymous and separated. Why? Because he had things he needed to communicate to his disciples, critical world-changing information that they needed to hear. The information was so important, so vital, he clearly wanted no distractions.

What exactly was that critical information that was so important that Jesus felt the need to distance himself for a time from the crowds that typically thronged him? Our text provided the answer: ***"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."***

The disciples could not possibly have been given more important information, and they would have done themselves a huge favor if they had paid attention. Perhaps they did, but if they had questions, they would have done themselves a great service had they opened their mouths and simply asked their Lord for further clarification of what he had just told them. They did not. From our text: ***But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.*** What does that even mean, "afraid to ask him"? Why "afraid"? How "afraid"? Afraid that Jesus would think them ignorant? He already knew that. More likely is that they were afraid of the answer, afraid they would hear

what they didn't want to hear. Afraid that Jesus would reveal plans that didn't align with their own.

Yet really the first question we need to ask is how they could *not* understand. Jesus' words could not possibly have been more straightforward or their meaning more obvious, and yet we are clearly told that **"they did not understand."** How could they **"not understand"**? There's really nothing unclear about: *"I'm going to be arrested and killed. After three days I will rise from the dead."* The only plausible explanation is that what Jesus was telling them was just so absolutely contrary to the future they had been envisioning, along with the elevated roles they assumed they would play in that future, that their minds simply refused to accept the reality of what he was telling them. *"He must mean something else, because he can't mean that!"*

In their defense, Jesus often spoke in parables and pictures, as when after the feeding of the five thousand he warned them to **"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees."** But the disciples were not in a good place at this point in Jesus' ministry, or in their own personal grasp of Jesus' mission and goal. Death was not on their radar. They saw themselves in the vanguard of a mighty army, a movement that would change the world by God's divine power. They had the "world-changing movement" and "divine power" parts right. They just didn't understand the goal or mission.

Which is further evidenced by what came next. First they kept their mouths closed when they should have opened them to ask Jesus to explain, then they opened them when they should have kept them closed. What came out certainly isn't pretty. Again from our text: **And when he (Jesus) was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"** <sup>34</sup> **But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.**

This is a really, really bad look for the disciples. There's no getting around that, only lessons for us to learn. Jesus had been revealing to them, in advance, how he was going to rescue the world – *including them* – from eternal torment in hell, and they devolved into a shameful, petty, pointless argument about which of them was the greatest. After Pentecost these same men went on to be great indeed, as *God* reckoned great, but not here. Not yet.

What was the problem? What was it that caused them to get all of this exactly upside-down and backwards? Pride. Their sinful, human pride – the insufferable scourge of every human being.

It was pride that turned their thoughts from *"it's all about Jesus"* to *"it's all about me."* In fact the great irony here is that what Jesus was telling them *actually was all about them*, but not in the way they had envisioned. They were preoccupied with life on earth and honor among men, with *"look at me"* rather than *"look at Jesus."* Jesus was all about the life that does not end.

How patiently Jesus dealt with his disciples. How patiently Jesus deals with us. The disciples were confused and misguided only until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. What's our excuse, having received the same gift as they?

I obviously can't speak for anyone else, but I know for a fact that I cannot be reminded often enough that God didn't record the failures of other men so that I can feel better or superior. Nor did he record them that I might be entertained by what would then amount to little more than gossip. God's Word was recorded and preserved so that each Christian might learn something about themselves. In fact there is an entire section in one of Paul's Epistles that spells this out:

<sup>ESV</sup> **(1 Corinthians 10:6-11) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.** <sup>7</sup> **Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."** <sup>8</sup> **We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.** <sup>9</sup> **We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,** <sup>10</sup> **nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.** <sup>11</sup> **Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.**

So what, exactly, are the lessons here? What is our loving, patient Savior trying to teach us?

Have you ever been too preoccupied with your own ideas about right and wrong to actually hear what your Savior has already told you? God said, for example, *"Don't commit adultery"* and *"Don't have marital relations unless you are married."* His word on this really could not be any clearer – just as his message to his disciples could not have been any clearer. And yet it's shocking how many still claim they *"don't understand."* God's answer – GOD'S answer: *"Of course you understand. You just don't want to hear it because your sinful pride*

*tells you that you know better. I said don't, but you decided you know better. So you talk when you should be listening, vainly trying to justify your actions."*

Obviously this is just one example. If this one doesn't happen to apply to you, how many others can you find in *your* life? God has clearly told us we are not supposed to lie, cheat, steal, love and trust anything more than him. Our pathetic and all-to-frequent response: *"I don't understand. You mean me? I'm not supposed to do those things? But, see, it's different with me. Let me explain to you, God, why I'm right."*

On the contrary, what is *supposed* to come out of our mouths when we are confronted with our sins? *"I am guilty, Lord. You are right. I am wrong. Always. God be merciful to me, the sinner."* Then, crushed by our guilt, we cling to the words of the Psalmist David in Psalm 51: ***"O Lord...you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."***

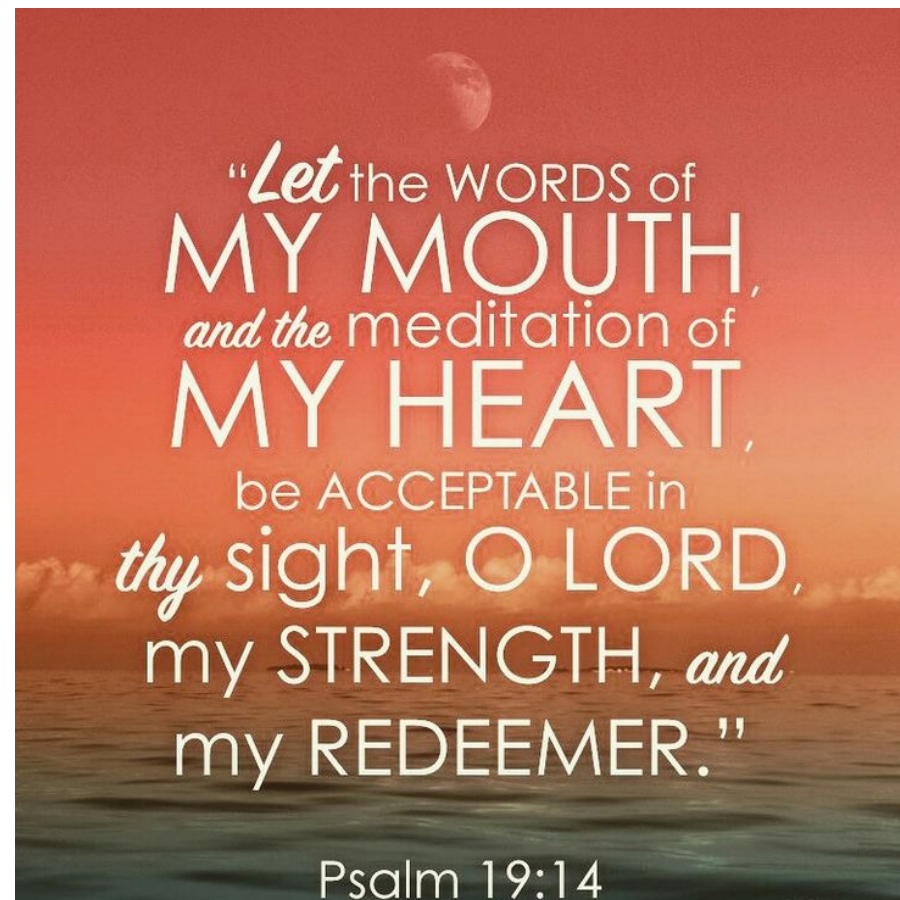
Then too we can be done talking and start listening (this time with true understanding) to what Jesus told his disciples in our text: ***"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."*** This is the message God wants broken sinners to hear: Jesus came to earth to save sinners. You just acknowledged that you are a sinner. Therefore Jesus came to save *you*. In fact he's already done that. On the cross he cleared from the divine ledger every single one of your sins, and by his Holy Spirit he has brought you to faith in him as your Savior. There is no "but" here. You have been redeemed, forgiven, saved. You are his own.

Then, believing, it is again the right time to open our mouths with our heartfelt *"Thank you Jesus!"* Amen.

ESV **Jeremiah 11:18-20** <sup>18</sup> The Lord made it known to me and I knew; then you showed me their deeds. <sup>19</sup> But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more." <sup>20</sup> But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.

ESV **James 3:13-4:10** <sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. 4:1 ¶What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

ESV **Mark 9:30-37** <sup>30</sup> They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, <sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. <sup>33</sup> ¶And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup> But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup> And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."



## ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Mick Johnson, President      Angela Pfennig, Organist  
Michael Roehl, Pastor

**The 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – September 22, 2024**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 34 (Stanzas 1-3) (Red Hymnal)

"My Soul, Now Bless Thy Maker"

## The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**The First Lesson:** (Jeremiah 11:18-20) Christians rightly see Jesus everywhere in the Old Testament. Often those "sightings" are confirmed in the New Testament. Our first reading is an example. The Eunuch in Acts 8 was reading these words and inquired of Philip about whom the Prophet was speaking. Philip confirmed to him that the words he was reading referred to Jesus – the Lamb led silently to the slaughter. All Scripture points to Jesus, our humble Savior.

**Psalm 85** (Supplement page 40) (Brown Hymnal)

**The Second Lesson:** (James 3:13-4:10) Our second lesson provides the connection between both Scripture readings and our sermon text. God abhors the prideful heart. God's Word often uses the word translated "meekness" as the opposite of that which God detests. Since all praise and glory rightly belong to God alone, it obviously stands to reason that all human pride is profoundly displeasing to our Holy God. James goes on to describe the multitude of problems associated with sinful human pride.

## The Confession of Faith -

Nicene Creed – (Projected on Screens)

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 385 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Now I have Found the Firm Foundation"

## The Sermon – Text: Mark 9:30-37 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**"Pride Opens Mouths that Should be Closed  
and Closes Mouths that Should be Opened"**

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

## The Communion Hymn – 305 (Stanzas 1 & 3) (Red Hymnal)

"Soul, Adorn Thyself with Gladness"

## The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

## The Distribution

## The Benediction

## The Closing Hymn - 34 (Stanza 4) (Red Hymnal)

"My Soul, Now Bless Thy Maker"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!  
**To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

## Attendance – Sunday (67) Average (38)

### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	<b>-11:15 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>-6:00 p.m.</b>	– Confirmation Class
	<b>-7:00 p.m.</b>	– Midweek Bible Study
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

**CLC News** – Pastor Zachary Sippert is scheduled to be installed as pastor of Grace of Sleepy Eye on September 29<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Drew Naumann is considering the call to St. Stephen of San Francisco. Due to our growing pastoral shortage, Redeemer of Bowdle, Zion of Ipswich, and Prince of Peace of Loveland will all be served by vacancy pastors from neighboring congregations.

**Wednesday Classes Resume** – Confirmation Class and Midweek Bible Study are scheduled to resume this Wednesday at 6 and 7pm respectively.

**Church Council Notes** – Having been unable to contact them for several years, Alex Block, Nathan Jager, Jasper Carman, and Ezra Hertz were removed from membership. Offerings for August were \$2,672 below budgeted needs and are now \$6,748 below budgeted needs YTD. The completed Financial Review found the congregation's records to be in good order. Several tasks remain on the Church Project List. Next meeting – October 7<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

**Well Done!** – There were only compliments from the participants at last week's Women's Retreat. Thanks to all who worked hard to make it so.