

## **I Have Compassion**

Mark 8:1-9

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity, August 4, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Pastors do not always tell their congregations what they are thinking.

As far as I can tell there are three reasons for this. First, they are not thinking anything. Second, what they are thinking is shameful and they do not want to admit it. Third, I have not fully thought through what I am thinking and I do not want to start thinking out loud because if you hear me thinking out loud you may take ideas from me that I will later discard and run with them when in the end I don't want to go in that direction at all. Rather than think out loud and have you take an idea that I am not going to pursue and risk you running with it, it is better not to tell you what I am thinking.

Early in a pastor's ministry the congregation asks him routinely, "Pastor, what do you think?" They are curious to see if the new pastor has some fresh idea that is helpful. Sometimes the people who ask me that question are hoping that the new pastor will agree with them over some congregational dispute of which he is unaware because he is new. They are hoping to use the pastor as leverage on other members of the congregation with whom they disagree. That is another reason that pastors will not always say what they are thinking.

I am happy that I have served you long enough here at Immanuel that you have quit asking me that question. Sometimes I feel unimportant, but that is ok. Humility is good for you and it is good for me. What I think does not matter.

What pastor thinks does not matter. What your Lord thinks is the only thing that matters. What is going through my head does not matter. What goes through the Lord's head is what matters. He will welcome you into the eternal dwellings prepared for you from the foundation of the world, or He will cast you into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Only what your Lord thinks matters.

So don't revel in my humanity. Sometimes when I am lamenting my faults and failures there is someone there to tell me, "It's ok, Pastor, you are only human." I find this statement startling every time someone makes it. It is not startling because I am not human. Of course I am human. It is startling because you are trying to comfort me by saying something obvious. Like a person who points out to another person in earnest that the sky is blue, you have to wonder why he is pointing it out when it should be obvious to anyone. When my humanity is so obvious, I have to wonder why you are pointing it out to me in an effort to comfort me. Why is it that it seems that you are the

one taking comfort in my humanity? Are you hoping that if pastor is committing the same sin you are that that sin is ok? Are you hoping that if you let me get away with my sins that I will let you get away with yours?

The problem, of course, is that my humanity does not matter. Your humanity does not serve as an excuse before the Lord for mine, nor does mine serve as an excuse before the Lord for yours.

The humanity about which you need to be concerned is the humanity of your Lord. You cannot use His humanity as an excuse for your sins. He will simply say to you, "I'm human too and I didn't sin. What's your excuse?"

And what does the Lord think of you?

He thinks, "I have compassion on you. I have compassion on you. I do not want to send you to your home empty lest you faint on the way. Some of you have come to Me from afar."

And you have come to Jesus.

We have a phrase in American English, "He came to Jesus." Sometimes we say, "He had that come to Jesus moment." When we say that, we usually say it after the old American revival tradition. When we say that we typically mean that the person in question came to believe in Jesus or repented of his sin or he came to realize that a sin he was committing really was a sin or something like that.

Does the phrase mean that? Of course it means that, but it does not merely mean that. The crowd that came to Jesus whom He fed miraculously came because they believed in Him. They would not have gone out into a wilderness area for three days unless they believed in Him. They had come to Jesus in the sense that they believed in Him. But they also physically came to Jesus and so have you.

When we celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar the body of Jesus is here. It is hidden under the form of bread, but it is nevertheless here. By a miracle which only our Lord could accomplish He repeatedly gives us His body to eat. When a person's body is present, they are physically present.

When we celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar your bodies are physically present. You are here. With your body you got up in the morning. You likely showered your body and dressed it. If you had time you fed your body. You got into your car with your body. Either you or someone else with their body turned the key in the ignition and drove here to church. Your body got out of the car and walked through the doors and sat in the pew. In a few moments the ushers will dismiss your body to the altar where you with your body will approach the Lord with His body and the two of you will have an encounter.

You have physically come to Him. He has miraculously and sacramentally come to you. It is not any different than the crowd of four thousand people who physically went out into the wilderness to be with Jesus.

And once you get here, He has compassion on you.

He does not wish to send you home empty. If He sends you home empty, you will faint on the way.

At home your vocations are waiting for you. At home your duties are waiting for you. At home are the responsibilities of father and mother. They are waiting for you at home. At home are the responsibilities of husband and wife. Those responsibilities and duties do not go away. At home are the responsibilities of son and daughter. You do not stop being those things just because you came to Divine Service today. You come to Divine Service precisely because those are your duties and you must return to them. You must return to your home.

You must return to them not merely because God commanded you to do so. You must return to them because you are created with these very vocations. Even the unbelievers are created into these vocations and they cannot avoid them any more than you can.

And some of you are like me. You live where you work. When you return home you return to the farm and there is your vocation all around you waiting for you. And some of you work set hours and you get the weekend off and you won't return to your vocation outside of the home until tomorrow, but tomorrow is coming. Sunday afternoon even if it contains a nap and I hope that it does will pass by and Monday morning will come and with it the responsibilities.

And oh the sins. The sins against your callings are the worst sins of them all. They are the ones that haunt you. The sins against being a good father and a good mother or a good son or a good daughter are the ones that follow you around for the rest of your life. They make you faint. The sins against your husband or against your wife are the sins which haunt you and they will not let you go. Even divorce and moving out of the home does not remove the sin that you committed against the other. The sins weigh on you. They drain you. They make you empty. If you are denying it, then you are a liar and the truth is not in you.

If you return to your homes in this way, you will faint on the way. The Lord has compassion on you. He does not want you to faint on the way. He is going to give you whatever it is that you need to fulfill the callings that you have and return to your homes.

Sometimes the Lord feeds people miraculously. He fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. He fed four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fish. He fed Israel for forty years in the wilderness. He fed a hundred men through Elisha the prophet with twenty loaves. He made sure that the oil and flour of the widow at Zarephath did not run out during the drought in Israel. The drought was three and one half years. He directed the ravens to bring Elijah food in the Cherith ravine. Sometimes the Lord feeds people miraculously.

Most of the time He just feeds them in the ordinary way. He gives them a vocation in which they earn a living. He blesses them in that vocation and they have bread to eat.

Sometimes the Lord heals people miraculously. He purified Naaman, the Syrian of his leprosy. He made the lame to walk at a word. He opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf by spitting on them. Even the touch of the fringe of His garments heals them. Even the shadow of His apostle Peter healed them. And sometimes He just sends them to the doctor and the physician heals them.

I don't know how He is going to provide for you. I don't even know what is going on in your vocations that is causing you to be faint or to be weary, but I do not need to know. Mark's Gospel makes it evident that the disciples who handed out the bread to the crowd did not know what was going on nor did they anticipate the miracle that the Lord was performing even while they handed out the bread to the crowd! I don't know either. I don't know what you are going through. I don't know how the Lord will provide. But what I know and what I think does not matter. The only thing that matters is what the Lord thinks and what the Lord will do.

And He is the Lord. He is the Lord who has come to meet you this day and every Divine Service and He says to you, "I have compassion on you!"

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.