

Sermon: 2019/04/17, 1205 (Ecumenical Service, First Baptist Church, McMinnville) - Mark 8:31-34

[Open up a bag of potatoes. Pull one out.]

What is *this*?

(In my hand, here.)

What would you call it?

What is the noun by which it is known?

Anybody?

[Wait for response.]

Right!

It is a "potato."

A starchy root-vegetable;

especially delicious fried;

and native to the North American continent.

But what other "labels" do we have for it?

Can you think of any abbreviated nick-names that we might call *this* (thing) by?

Well, in Great Britain - in Yorkshire - we might say that this is a... "*tater*."

(A "*tater*.")

So, why mention this?

Because we *Christians* are called upon, repeatedly, in the New Testament, explicitly and implicitly, to be *imi-taters* of Christ.

It is a necessary aspect of our being saved - to be set apart for life in abundance.

The essence of discipleship; of *holiness*.

To be an *imi-tater* of Jesus. [Throw.]

[Grab another p.] For too many of us, however, sitting in a pew - keeping it warm - seems to be the summation - *the pinnacle* - of our expression of Faith; of our religion.

You know, in Old English, a church-pew was called a "*settle*."

Which is a perfect name for what many Western Christians do - they *settle* for sitting in a *settle* on Sundays, and think that's all there is!

That no more is required.

That no more is expected.

Too many of us, in other words, are merely *spec-taters*. [Throw.]

We are content to watch as others - the pastor, the "missionary," the nursery-school attendants, the VBS volunteers - do the "heavy-lifting" of the Kingdom, whilst we are idle.

And we make excuses for our complacency:

"I am too old;"

"I am too weak;"

"I am too shy."

But, my friends, we have *all* been given a "Great Commission."

There aren't any hall-passes.

[Grab another p.] Fortunately, there *is* a minority who "get this."

They have gleaned from the Scriptures that spectating isn't enough.

Not to preserve us from the reckoning that is coming *and* the chaos that is already here.

They make time - as all should - to get up, out of the "settle," to attend Sunday School and Bible-classes.

Maybe they've taken an online certificate in theology or something.

Maybe they're part of a "Small Fellowship Group."

Great!

If this is you, you are a commen-*tater*. [Throw.]

And what do we commen-*taters* love to do most of all - to talk!

And to talk in particular about how *glorious* is the cross of Christ; the sacrifice of "Good Friday."

It *truly* is our (love-)"story, ...our song."

What blessed assurance we find in seeing Jesus hung up there on our behalf.

Intercessing, justifying, satisfying the justice and mercy of God all at once.

In one body, on a "tree."

But even as we marvel and wonder when we reflect on our Savior's crucifixion, we should *wince* too.

Why?

Firstly - most obviously(!), because *my* sins and *your* sins - sins we likely have committed this very morning - made its agony necessary.

But secondly we should wince when we consider the Cross because it too must be imitated.

- Hence the gospel-lesson we heard just moments ago.

We too, then, must *die* for God.

Hopefully, not literally:

we have the *enormous* privilege of living in a country where though we might be occasionally ridiculed and scorned, we aren't being lined against walls and shot at gunpoint, which is the reality for many of our coreligionists - our brothers and sisters - in large, hot, dusty swathes of the world.

But we must put to death the old nature that made the events of "Holy Week"

essential.

That old nature - "Adam," as he is called in the Old Testament - has no place in the 'new heavens and the new earth' that are promised: [Rev. 21:1].

His selfishness,
His materialism,
His gluttony,
and tribalism.

These things must be sacrificed too.

For, "See," says Jesus (via the prophet Isaiah), "I am doing a new thing." [Is. 43:19]

Let's pray: [BCP's 'Post Communion Prayer' on bulletin.]