

"ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS"

MARK 1:29-39

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

MESSIAH, BOERNE

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT. AMEN.

TEXT: MK 1:29-39

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST:

"ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS." WE'VE ALL PROBABLY
HEARD THIS SAYING, AND SOMETIMES WE EVEN HAVE A SPECIAL
OPPORTUNITY TO PUT IT INTO PRACTICE, FOR EXAMPLE, ON A
BIRTHDAY OR ANNIVERSARY, MOTHER'S DAY OR FATHER'S DAY, AND
IN TEN DAYS WHEN IT'S "VALENTINE'S DAY." ON THOSE DAYS WE
NOT ONLY SAY, "I LOVE YOU," BUT ALSO TRY TO GIVE THOSE
WORDS CONCRETE EXPRESSION BY GIVING OUR LOVED ONES A CARD,
FLOWERS, CANDY, OR SOME OTHER GIFT. WE MAY HAVE SAID TO
THAT LOVED ONE A THOUSANDS OF TIMES, "I LOVE YOU," BUT WHEN
WE WANT TO MAKE SURE SHE OR HE REALLY KNOWS IT, WE REMEMBER
THIS IMPORTANT SAYING: "ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS."

TODAY WE ALSO THINK ABOUT THOSE WORDS AS WE CONSIDER
OUR GOSPEL TEXT. IN THE BIBLE JESUS PROCLAIMS HIMSELF TO
BE THE MESSIAH, THE PROMISED SAVIOR OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE
ISRAEL. YET JESUS DIDN'T JUST CLAIM TO BE THE MESSIAH. HE
ALSO DEMONSTRATED HIS MESSIAHSHIP BY HIS ACTIONS. JESUS

FULFILLED THE WORDS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS ABOUT THE MESSIAH BY HIS WORKS OF GRACE, MERCY, AND POWER, THEREBY PROCLAIMING HIMSELF IN WORDS AND DEEDS TO BE THE MESSIAH, THE PROMISED KING OF ISRAEL. YOU SEE, WHEN IT COMES TO BEING GOD'S MESSIAH, "ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS."

AFTER HIS TEMPTATION BY SATAN IN THE DESERT, JESUS BEGAN HIS MESSIANIC MINISTRY IN GALILEE. HE WENT TO THE SYNAGOG IN NAZARETH, HIS HOMETOWN. AFTER READING A PASSAGE FROM THE SCROLL OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH CONCERNING THE MESSIAH, JESUS SAID, "TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE IS FULFILLED IN YOUR HEARING" (LK 4:21). JESUS PROCLAIMED THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR IN SPIRIT IN NAZARETH, AND BY SO DOING FULFILLED PART OF HIS MESSIANIC MISSION. BUT IT WOULD TAKE MORE THAN WORDS TO CONVINCЕ THE PEOPLE OF NAZARETH THAT HE WAS GOD'S MESSIAH. THEY WANTED TO SEE ACTION. THEY WANTED JESUS TO DO SOME MIRACLE AMONG THEM AS HE HAD DONE ELSEWHERE. SINCE HE DIDN'T DO SO BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF, THEY REJECTED HIM.

JESUS THEN LEFT NAZARETH AND WENT TO LIVE IN THE LAKESIDE TOWN OF CAPERNAUM (MT 4:13). AS WE HEARD LAST WEEK, JESUS WENT INTO THEIR SYNAGOG AND TAUGHT THEM AS WELL, AND THE PEOPLE RECOGNIZED THAT JESUS' TEACHING WAS DIFFERENT THAN THAT OF THEIR TEACHERS OF THE LAW. JESUS

TAUGHT THEM AS ONE WHO HAD AUTHORITY, AND THAT AUTHORITY WAS DEMONSTRATED WHEN HE CLEANSED A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN IN THEIR MIDST. THE DEMON RECOGNIZED WHO JESUS WAS—"THE HOLY ONE OF GOD" (V 24)—BUT THE PEOPLE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND AND BELIEVE.

DO WE? DO WE UNDERSTAND FROM GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE, THAT JESUS IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, GOD'S ANOINTED AND APPOINTED SERVANT FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD? DO WE BELIEVE HIS WORDS THAT CALL US TO REPENT OF OUR SINS AND BELIEVE IN HIM AS OUR SAVIOR—WORDS CONFIRMED BY HIS MIRACULOUS DEEDS—OR DO WE SEEK A SAVIOR OF OUR OWN MAKING FROM THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THIS LIFE?

WE LIVE IN A SINFUL WORLD, ARE BURDENED BY OUR SINFUL NATURE, AND SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SINS DAILY. EMOTIONAL DISTRESS, SICKNESS, DISEASE, AND DEATH CAUSE US TO DOUBT GOD'S LOVE FOR US AND HIS POWER TO DELIVER US FROM OUR ENEMIES. WE MAY EVEN LOSE HOPE AND SEEK RELIEF IN WAYS THAT DO NOT GLORIFY THE TRIUNE GOD AND JESUS CHRIST, WHOM GOD SENT TO SAVE US (LK 19:10).

WHEN WE LOOK TO GOD'S WORD, HOWEVER, AND OUR GOSPEL LESSON FOR TODAY IN PARTICULAR, WE SEE JESUS DOING THE VERY THINGS PROPEHSIED CONCERNING THE MESSIAH, AND OUR FAITH IN JESUS IS THEREBY STRENGTHENED. OUR TEXT SAYS THAT JESUS

HEALED MANY WHO HAD VARIOUS DISEASES. HE DROVE OUT MANY DEMONS. HE EVEN DELIVERED PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW FROM A GREAT FEVER, THEREBY DEMONSTRATING HIS PERSONAL CONCERN NOT ONLY FOR HIS DISCIPLES, BUT FOR THEIR FAMILIES AS WELL. BY HIS MINISTRY OF PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS, HEALING THE SICK, AND DRIVING OUT DEMONS, JESUS GAVE PROOF TO ALL THAT HE TRULY IS GOD'S ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON AND THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD (V 39).

GOD TRULY LOVES ALL PEOPLE AND PROMISES TO DELIVER THEM FROM THIS SIN-SICK WORLD BY MEANS OF JESUS' SINLESS LIFE AND SACRIFICIAL DEATH ON THE CROSS. YOU SEE, IT'S AT THE CROSS OF CALVARY THAT WE SEE GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE MOST CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED. IN JESUS' ROLE AS THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF THE LORD, HE WILLINGLY OFFERED UP HIS LIFE ON THE CROSS AS THE SPOTLESS LAMB OF GOD AND TOOK UPON HIMSELF THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD. AS ISAIAH WRITES: "SURELY HE TOOK UP OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS, YET WE CONSIDERED HIM STRICKEN BY GOD, SMITTEN BY HIM, AND AFFLICTED. BUT HE WAS PIERCED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE PUNISHMENT THAT BROUGHT US PEACE WAS UPON HIM, AND BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED" (IS 53:4-5).

NOW GOD HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (ROM 8:26-27), GIVEN TO US THROUGH HIS WORD AND IN HOLY BAPTISM (ACTS 2:38). IN OUR TEXT WE SEE JESUS GETTING UP VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING AND GOING OFF TO A SOLITARY PLACE TO PRAY TO HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN (V 35). HE NEEDED TO TALK TO HIM AND RECEIVE STRENGTH FOR THE DEMANDING TASK GOD HAD GIVEN HIM—THAT OF SAVING THE WHOLE WORLD. WE NEED GOD'S STRENGTH AS JESUS' DISCIPLES, TOO, BUT DUE TO OUR SINFUL NATURE WE OFTEN DON'T RECOGNIZE IT, LET ALONE ASK FOR GOD'S HELP. NEVERTHELESS, WHEN WE DON'T KNOW HOW OR EVEN WHAT TO PRAY, THE SPIRIT HIMSELF PRAYS FOR US WITH GROANS THAT WORDS IN ANY LANGUAGE CAN'T EXPRESS (ROM 8:26). THE SPIRIT PRAYS FOR US IN OUR MOMENTS OF GREATEST NEED, AND GOD IS THERE—WITH US—AND PROMISES THAT HE WILL NEVER LEAVE US OR FORSAKE US, SO GREAT IS HIS LOVE FOR US.

GOD'S ACTIONS FOR US THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST CALL ON US ALL TO BE ACTIVE IN LOVE FOR HIM. WE ARE TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF OUR LOVING SAVIOR WITH OTHERS IN WORD AND DEED. THE GREATEST EXPRESSION OF OUR LOVE FOR THEM IS TO LET THEM KNOW OF THEIR ETERNAL SALVATION IN WORDS. WHEN WE TELL OTHERS THE STORY OF JESUS' LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION, THEN WE HAVE TOLD THEM THE MOST IMPORTANT

MESSAGE THEY'LL EVER HEAR. BY OUR WORDS OF WITNESS TO JESUS, WE DEMONSTRATE THAT WE TRULY CARE.

YET WE MUST ALSO PUT THOSE WORDS INTO ACTIONS. WE LEARN FROM JESUS IN OUR TEXT TODAY HOW IMPORTANT IT IS NOT ONLY TO *TELL* PEOPLE WE LOVE THEM BUT ALSO TO *SHOW* OUR LOVE TO OTHERS BY CARING FOR THEM IN THEIR TIME OF NEED. THIS EXPRESSION OF OUR LOVE MAY ONLY BE A SHORT VISIT, A PHONE CALL, OR A GREETING CARD, BUT IT'S AN ACTIVE DEMONSTRATION OF OUR LOVE FOR THEM. AS CHRISTIANS WE DON'T JUST SAY, "GOD IS LOVE." WE SHOW GOD IS LOVE IN OUR LIVES.

DEAR FRIENDS, I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY OF YOU KNOW THE STORY OF ST. VALENTINE, BUT HE WAS A MARTYR OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE EARLY CHURCH. THE STORY IS TOLD THAT HE SHARED THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE WITH HIS MASTER'S DAUGHTER BY SENDING HER A WRITTEN MESSAGE FROM HIS PRISON CELL, SIGNED "YOUR VALENTINE." THIS IS HOW THE CUSTOM BEGAN OF SENDING GREETING CARDS TO OUR LOVED ONES ON VALENTINE'S DAY. YET THE GREATEST EXPRESSION OF ST. VALENTINE'S LOVE WAS NOT WRITTEN ON A CARD BUT ON THE LETTER OF HIS LIFE WHEN HE BECAME A MARTYR—A WITNESS TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST—BY DYING FOR HIS FAITH.

YOU, TOO, SHOW YOURSELVES TO BE A LETTER FROM CHRIST, WRITTEN WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, BY SHOWING LOVE

TO ONE ANOTHER (2 COR 3:3). INDEED, LET'S SHOW IN ALL WE
DO THAT WE ARE TRULY JESUS' DISCIPLES BY LOVING EACH OTHER
AS CHRIST LOVED US (JN 13:35), FOR "ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER
THAN WORDS." AMEN.