

Don't Tell Anyone

A Sermon by the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith

September 21, 2025

Readings

Lamentations 3:22-33, 40, 41 (Kempton Translation, modified)

- 22 It is of the mercies of Jehovah that we are not entirely consumed,
because His compassions are not all consumed.
- 23 They are new in the mornings;
great is Your faithfulness.
- 24 "Jehovah is my part," says my soul;
therefore I will hope in Him.
- 25 Jehovah is good to those who wait for Him,
to the soul that seeks Him.
- 26 It is good that a man should both hope and be still
for the salvation of Jehovah.
- 27 It is good for a mighty man
that he bear the yoke in his youth.
- 28 He sits alone and is still,
because [God] has laid it upon him.
- 29 He puts his mouth in the dust;
if it be so, there is hope.
- 30 He gives his jaw to him who smites him;
he is satisfied with reproach.
- 31 For the Lord will not cast off for eternity;
32 but though He makes sorrowful,
yet He will have compassion
according to the multitude of His mercies.
- 33 For He does not afflict from His heart,
nor make the sons of men sorrowful.
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- 40 Let us search our ways and search them out,
and turn back to Jehovah.
- 41 Let us lift up our heart with our hands
unto God in the heavens.

Mark 5:22-24, 35-43 (Kempton Translation, modified)

²² And behold, there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and having seen Him, he falls at His feet, ²³ and implored Him insistently, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death; come, put Your hands on her, that she may be saved, and she shall live." ²⁴ And [Jesus] departed with him; and a crowd of many followed Him, and thronged Him.

³⁵ While [Jesus] was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, "Your daughter is dead; why trouble the Teacher any further?"

³⁶ But Jesus straightaway, having heard the word that was spoken, said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid, only believe." ³⁷ And He let no one follow with Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the uproar, those weeping and shouting much. ³⁹ And coming in, He said to them, "Why do you make an uproar, and weep? The little child is not dead, but sleeps."

⁴⁰ And they laughed at Him; but He, putting them all out, took along the father of the little child and the mother, and those with Him, and goes in where the little child was set down. ⁴¹ And having taken hold of the hand of the little child, He says to her, "Talitha, cumi!" which is, being translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" ⁴² And straightaway the little girl stood up and walked, for she was twelve years old; and they were amazed with a great amazement. ⁴³ And [Jesus] ordered them insistently that no one should know this; and He said that something should be given her to eat.

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The Lord could heal the intellect in everyone and so cause him to entertain in thought not evils but goods, and this by various fears, by miracles, by conversations with the deceased, and by visions and dreams. But to heal the intellect only is to heal the person only outwardly. For the intellect with its thought is the outer constituent of a person's life, while the will with its affection is the inner constituent of his life. Consequently a healing of the intellect alone would be a kind of palliative cure, which would allow the inner malignancy, being shut in and prevented from emerging, to consume first the neighboring areas and afterward the outlying ones, until the whole was necrotic and dying. It is the underlying will that must be healed... by being instructed and exhorted by the intellect.

Introduction

- We're talking today about speaking up and keeping quiet.
 - You may have found that you prefer one or the other.
 - Maybe you find that you have a lot to say and you like the chance to say it.
 - Or maybe you find that you prefer to not say much.
 - You may also find that you speak up in some places more than others.
 - Some people are comfortable speaking up in a classroom.
 - Other people are more comfortable speaking up on the sports field.
- But, all of us, if we're trying to follow the Lord, will have some work to do in this area.
 - All of us will have to learn to speak up in certain circumstances, when we'd rather not.
 - And all of us will have to learn to keep quiet in other circumstances, when we'd really rather say something.
- One of the early followers of the Lord, the apostle James, wrote in a letter, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless" (James 1:26).
 - That's what we're working on today – bridling our tongue, getting our tongue under control.
 - Understanding when to tell our tongue to giddy-up and when to tell it, "Woah!"
 - That's part of being religious in a genuine way; that's part of following the Lord.
- This brings us to the intriguing thing we're going to be studying and pondering today in the Lord's Word.
 - We might think that the Lord would always want His followers to speak up, when talking about Him, when talking about who the Lord is and what He's done for them.
 - But this is what's so confusing and intriguing: there are lots of examples when the Lord healed someone or showed them something amazing and then told them, "Don't tell anyone."
 - Other times, however, the Lord *did* tell people to share the good news of what He had done for them.
 - Today, we're going to try to understand why the Lord did this and what it means for us about when we should speak up and when we should keep quiet.

Outline

- As you can probably imagine there are a lot of theories out there about what's going on here.
- And – spoiler alert – there is not one definitive answer.
 - The teachings for the New Church do not directly speak to this question.
 - And even if they did, it seems unlikely that there would be just one reason for the Lord's behavior.
 - It seems very likely that there are multiple factors at play.
- We will be looking at just a few threads of this discussion as they show up in two contrasting stories from chapter 5 of the Gospel of Mark:
 - One story in which Jesus tells the person to spread the good news
 - and the other in which Jesus tells the people to not tell anyone.
- When today's service is over, you might like to read the whole fifth chapter of Mark to see which story most resonates with where you're at in your life right now.
 - You can read the stories in full and another healing story that's in the middle of that same chapter.
 - You can use the copies of the Word in the pews and read the chapter during the postlude at the end of the service.
 - Or you can read it when you get home.
- As you do, you can keep in mind what the Lord's goals were for the people in the stories and what His goals are for you.
 - This was expressed in our lesson from *Divine Providence*.
 - If the Lord just cared about our intellect and its thoughts, He could do all sorts of things to fix them.
 - But He cares about something much deeper – our wills, our hearts – and to heal those is more difficult.
 - Doing what will best serve healing people's hearts is His priority in the stories we're going to consider and is also His priority in your life.

The Man Who Had a Legion of Demons Cast Out of Him

- The first story in chapter 5 of Mark, is of a demon-possessed man having a legion of demons cast out of him.
- Mark 5:2-5 (Kempton Translation, modified)
 - ² And when [Jesus] had come out of the ship, straightaway there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ³ who had his dwelling in the tombs; and no one could bind him with chains, ⁴ since he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been pulled apart by him and the fetters had broken apart; and no one had the strength to tame him. ⁵ And continually, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.
- This is a picture of some aspect of our lives that is totally out of control.
 - We've tried all sorts of things and just cannot control ourselves.
- For today, we're going to skip over how the Lord casts a legion of demons out of the man and focus on what happens afterwards.
- After the man is healed he begs to be with the Lord.
 - But Jesus forbids him from coming with Him, and He instead says to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."
 - So this is an example where someone is healed and they are told that they should tell other people.
 - And the man does: he goes and proclaims what Jesus did for him over a large area of many cities.
- We're going to look at how this story is relevant to our lives in two ways:
 - Sharing the good news within ourselves
 - Sharing the good news with other people

Sharing the Good News Within Ourselves

- The man who had had all the demons cast out of him ended up spreading the good news far and wide but it's interesting to look carefully at what Jesus actually told him to do.
 - He said, "Go home to your friends, and tell them...."
 - More literally He said, "Go to your house and to your own...."

- Yes, he was supposed to spread the news but starting at his own house.
- Listen to this passage about the meaning of a house:
 - *Arcana Coelestia* 10110:3
 - A person may be compared to a house with a large number of rooms leading one into the next. People who have truths solely in their understanding are not in any room in the house but merely in the court outside. But truth which has also been made part of the will and becomes good there is compared to a room that is lived in and to the actual bedchamber.
- The Lord was telling the man to take the news inward – to internalize it, to take it to heart.
 - To really process the experience, back in the context of normal life.
- When we have a profound spiritual experience – an aha moment, or a feeling of being freed from something that was weighing on us for years – there’s the desire to stay in that up experience.
 - Like the man who begged to be with the Lord.
- But if that experience is going to have a longterm effect in our lives, then we need to go back to normal life and think about what the Lord has done for us in that context.
- We need to be like Mary in the Christmas story.
 - When Jesus was born the angels came and told the shepherds to go find the baby in the manger.
 - And after they did, it says, “they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:17-19).
 - The Greek word for “kept” means literally to guard together, and the Greek word for “ponder” means literally to throw things together.
 - Mary guarded things together and really turned them over within herself – and not in her head: she kept all these things and pondered them *in her heart*.
- It might be that you feel like you don’t have anything to ponder; you don’t have any dramatic story to share about what miraculous thing the Lord has done for you.

- That's fine.
- We don't all have dramatic, life-altering experiences all the time.
- And sometimes the miracles the Lord is doing in our lives are much more subtle.
- If you're struggling to see the Lord working in your life, then that's all the more reason to spend some time going inward and pondering.
 - Where has the Lord been present in your life this week?
 - How has He helped you to not hurt yourself or other people as much?
 - How would you like the Lord to be present in your life?

Sharing the Good News With Other People

- Now let's talk about sharing the good news with other people.
- When we've first done the work to take our experiences to heart, then we are more ready to share them with other people.
 - When something has first happened and we haven't processed it much, there can be a lot of story to it and sometimes a lot of focus on ourselves might come out in the way we share the story.
 - When we've done the work to get to the heart of the matter, we will have connected with humility, with gratitude to the Lord, with a clearer sense of how much we need the Lord and cannot do it on our own.
- When we've gotten to the heart of the matter, it also will help us to share our story in a way that emphasizes what matters and doesn't have to include details of other people's lives that might be distracting.
- A clear part of what the man was told to do by the Lord was to share what the Lord had done for *him*.
 - The Lord said, "...tell them what great things the Lord has done *for you*, and how He has had compassion *on you*."
 - If we are only ever telling other people's stories of what the Lord has done for them, then something is missing.
 - What is your first-hand experience of the Lord?
 - What has the Lord done *for you*?
 - How has He had compassion *on you*?
 - Start by figuring that out within yourself and then you will be in a better place to share that good news with other people.

The Little Girl Who Was Raised from the Dead

- Now let's turn to the story of the little girl being raised from the dead.
- The girl's father, Jairus, was a ruler of the synagogue – a leader of the Jewish people who would have known the Word of God very well.
 - And yet, in spite of all that, his precious daughter was dying.
- Here we have a picture of all the trappings of religious belief and knowledge with a dying heart.
 - Little girls in the word are symbolic of pure affections – the innocent part of us that wants to just learn from the Lord and do what He says.
 - And as we get older we might remember that feeling of trust and innocence in a vague way but it seems to be dying and there's nothing we can do about it.
- And then along comes this revolutionary man named Jesus who has done all sorts of other amazing things.
- There are lots of details of this story that could be fun to go into but, for today, let's jump to the end.
 - After Jesus has put everyone out of the house except for Peter, James, and John and the girl's father and mother, He goes into the inner room, takes the girl by the hand, tells her to arise and immediately she does.
 - And then it says, "And [Jesus] ordered them insistently that no one should know this; and He said that something should be given her to eat."
 - This is an example of Jesus telling people to tell no one.
 - But He just raised a girl from the dead!
 - Don't tell anyone.
- When we think of Jairus' important position in society and the crowd that was a big part of this story, then Jesus' command makes more sense.
- When Jesus is on his way the people say, "Your daughter is dead; why trouble the Teacher any further?"
 - Thoughts that say give up. The Lord can't help. Stop bothering him.
- When He gets to the house it's full of people weeping and shouting – making a huge noise about how tragic it is that the girl has died.
 - But then they have no belief that the Lord can help.
 - They laugh at him.
 - This is the jaded, cynical part of us that would rather wallow in how bad things are and laugh at the possibility of change.

- This crowd was going to be around Jairus' his whole life and it could make it difficult for him to figure out what he believed for himself and make it difficult for him to articulate it to others.
- And so the Lord says to tell no one but to feed his daughter.
 - Feed that innocent desire to follow the Lord in the inner room of your mind.
 - Don't get distracted by the commotion outside; focus on what's inside your heart.
- Imagine if Jairus had not followed the Lord's orders.
 - Imagine if he had immediately gone out to the crowd and made a big speech.
 - "I went and called Jesus to come to my house, to help my dear daughter. On the way, some people came to tell me that it was no use. Other people laughed at the idea that she might be healed, but I still believed. And look now, my daughter is alive and well!"
 - Gross.
 - Do you see how this amazing miracle would have been externalized?
 - Do you see how it could so easily suddenly no longer be about caring for his daughter but about Jairus and his reputation?
 - Let's not do that.
 - As it says in Lamentations, "It is good that a man should both hope and be still for the salvation of Jehovah" (3:26).
 - Ignore the crowd outside.
 - Feed your daughter.
- Years ago, another minister shared his experience with this topic with me and it's really helped me personally.
- Here's the gist of what he said:
 - Sometimes when the Lord has done something wonderful for me, I hear Him saying "Don't tell anyone." When something wonderful has happened, I often notice a mix of things in the after-state. In that mix there's a sense of selfish pride and merit (the hells never miss an opportunity to inject that). If I "tell others" from that, I mess up. If I tell them with use to others in mind, and from the sense of genuine humility and gratitude, that's OK.

- That's an example of the kind of discernment that we are aiming for.
 - The ability to recognize when the Lord is counseling us to speak up and when He is cautioning us to not tell anyone.
- In well-run programs, like the *Rise Above It* program that we're doing at the moment, you are encouraged to share your experience and you are also always given the option to pass.
 - We should all probably make use of both of those options at different times.

Conclusion

- These are just two stories from the Lord's Word about this.
- There are a lot more stories in the Gospels in which the Lord tells people to share the good news or tells people to keep something quiet.
 - Reading and pondering those stories will continue to flesh out your picture of this intriguing, complex, and important subject.
- For today, you might simply focus on connecting with what the Lord has done for you and inviting the Lord into your decisions about when to speak and when to stay silent.
 - "Let us search our ways and search them out,
and turn back to Jehovah.
Let us lift up our heart with our hands
unto God in the heavens (Lamentation 3:40, 41).
 - "Set a guard, O Jehovah, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).
- Amen.

If you would like to talk more about this topic, get in touch with Malcolm at malcolm.smith@brynathynchurch.org.