**Urgency** Sept 22, 2024 Mk 9:30-38

* I recall when I lived in Montreal & worked for the railway at a time when the future of the Company was very uncertain. The Company was in transition having just gone from being a Crown Corp. to a private company & the returns were not looking very promising. The new president & CEO declared that the primary problem was that there was no sense of urgency. And for the next year or so, his focus, and consequently everyone’s focus began to be a sense of urgency.
* As we followed the lectionary from Mark’s gospel & the sequence of Jesus’ travels over the past several weeks, and even more so in the next few weeks, there is a real sense of urgency that can be seen.
* We see this sense of urgency in the way in which Jesus is now teaching His disciples.
* For example, last week we read where He asked (challenged) His disciples to

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declare who He was.

* After they reported who others said that He was, then Jesus said to them: “***But what about you? Who do you say that I am?***”
* We concluded (*or I concluded for you*): this was the most important question that they would ever have to answer & the most important question that you or I will ever have to answer.
* And the answer isn’t an easy one that many perpetual smiling Christians would like to think it is.
* We can’t possibly wrestle with & answer this question honestly without realizing the sense of urgency that comes with the answer.
* Peter was the first to answer with his great confession that Jesus was the Christ (the Messiah)
* But Peter’s answer had come much too easily – His initial idea of Messiah was one that didn’t require pain & suffering.
* His only idea of urgency was the freedom of the Jews from the tyranny &

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power of Rome.

* Jesus’ urgency however was having His disciples understand the cross and God’s plan for the freedom *of all mankind* from

the tyranny & power of sin and death.

* So, immediately following Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus began teaching His disciples about His forthcoming suffering & death, & told Peter that he was being an agent of Satan by his not being willing to accept that the true understanding of Him as the Christ would involve suffering & pain.
* Essentially Jesus was saying to both His disciples & to you and me today: “*I****t is meaningless to proclaim Him as Christ unless our proclamation includes the Cross.***”
* In other words, acknowledging Jesus means that we have to come face to face with, and acknowledge our own sinfulness – because all the pain, all the ugliness and all the suffering associated with Jesus on the cross was specifically

because of your sins and mine.

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* And we cannot get rid off or be freed from our sins & the crippling guilt that goes with them until we 1st acknowledge our sins, and 2nd give them to Jesus.
* If we are growing & deepening our relationship with Jesus, this will inevitably mean that we will also be growing in our understanding of the cross.
* I recall one time when I was visiting a man in hospital who had been admitted with some excruciating pain.
* With the pain mostly under control, he was able to spend time reading a good Christian book that looked at the cross, & just how horrible it was.
* He shared with me how he now had an appreciation of how horrible & painful it must have been for Jesus as the spikes ripped through His flesh, & how it made his pain seem so trivial.
* And with tears running down his face he shared how the worst part of all was the fact that it was ***his*** sins that was the cause of Jesus’ suffering & pain.

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* He surely got it & what a beautiful thing to witness him reflect his deepening understanding of the cross.
* Another way we can see the sense of urgency is where Jesus is now traveling.
* Most of Jesus’ ministry happened throughout the regions of Galilee & Judea, but in last week’s reading we read where he & His disciples were in the region of Ceasarea Philippi, an area about 30 miles North of Sea of Galilee – deep in Gentile country.
* Jesus withdrew here with His disciples because he had to be able to spend some time alone with His disciples, teaching them.
* We read things like: “***Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because He was teaching His disciples***.” (Mk 9:30)
* Today’s reading – ‘***came to Capernaum***’ which is located directly on the North shore of the sea of Galilee– back in Jewish country
* Jesus left the safety of the North country

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& was traveling towards Jerusalem & the cross.

* This was an urgent time because Jesus knew the cross was not far in front of Him & this was the last chance to spend time teaching His disciples.
* Surely, one would think, the disciples were benefiting from this special time alone with Jesus and His teaching – surely they were on track by now.
* Teachers will understand just how hard it is to look out at their students & realize that they are just not understanding something – & of course the teacher would do everything possible to ensure understanding happened.
* But Jesus was teaching & planting information in the minds of the disciples that He knew would only make sense after the events of Good Friday & Easter Sunday.
* We read where ***they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it***.
* It’s not that they were afraid of Jesus, but

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more that they were so uncomfortable with what Jesus was telling them, they just didn’t want or couldn’t bear to hear any more.

* Something like us hearing bad news from our doctor and being afraid to ask for more details because we are afraid of what the answer might be.
* So Jesus continued to teach them even though He knew they weren’t getting it – He was planting seeds for the future. He took every opportunity to teach.
* Story about when Jesus ascended to heaven & was asked by one of the angels how He planned on spreading His plan of salvation to the world. And he told the angel that he had left a group of disciples to carry on his ministry & mission. The angel then asked what alternative plan he had in the event this plan failed & Jesus responded that He had no other plan.
* I think if it was me teaching about the need for humility, self-denial, self-sacrifice, being a servant of all, and then

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discovering that my students only response was to be arguing who was the greatest among them – I would surely throw my hands in the air & give up – thinking that I was wasting my time & it was simply no use to continue.

* Repeatedly Jesus told His disciples what

awaited Him in Jerusalem, & yet they were still caught up in their own little world. They were still thinking of his kingdom in earthly terms and of themselves as His chief ministers of state. They were arguing among themselves about who would have the greatest position and status in this regime.

* I’m sure many would take this personally as a failure But Jesus simply uses this as another opportunity to teach His disciples.
* ***Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve to him*** (Mk 9:35)
* When a Rabbi was teaching, just as a master teaches his scholars and disciples, when he was really making a

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pronouncement, he would sit to teach.

* This time Jesus used a little child to illustrate His teaching, but the message was exactly the same. “The last shall be first – servanthood – humility.”
* God’s message never changes
* You or I would probably get quite discouraged if we were attempting to teach such a stiff-necked & slow group as the disciples appear to be.
* But in spite of their stubbornness to hear what he was really saying, Jesus just perseveres with the same consistent message – one which we know eventually bore great fruit both in the disciples’ lives, and subsequently through their teaching to the early Church.
* **It had to** because this was not man’s teaching – it was God’s teaching. Not man’s plan – it was God’s plan.
* Jesus’ model for teaching offers great hope for us today.
* 1st of all, I believe we can sometimes be as stubborn and stiff-necked as the

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disciples were.

* But Jesus never gives up on us
* As long as we have the breath of life within us, Jesus offers us the gift of salvation.
* His teaching never changes – the message is always the same.
* Maybe it was like a seed planted when we were young, but Jesus never gives up on us – He waits for us to choose.
* 2ndly, for the Church – Jesus’ persistence and model for teaching is exactly the same model for the Church today.
* Some may question this model when we consider some of the things that are happening even within our church & how some churches & dioceses are getting caught up in the ways of the world and turning away from the orthodox teaching of God’s Word in Scripture.
* But in the midst of all the controversy, struggle and even heresy within the church, the Church’s model is still Jesus & that model is to persevere with the truth

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* Jesus said: “***I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.***” (Matt 16:17)
* We may forget that it’s not about man’s teaching or man’s plan – ***it is about God’s plan &God’s teaching.***
* And in the end result, that is the plan that will prevail.
* **It has to** because it is God’s plan
* Real sense of urgency is to grasp the truth of the Cross & how it represents fullness of God’s love for each one of us – how the cross can free us from sin & guilt & can bring wholeness & healing for all of us.
* Jesus said: ***“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”***(Mk 8:36-37)
* I believe each one of us is faced with a sense of urgency – and that is important.
* But the even more important message is found in Jesus’ model in teaching His disciples: “***He never gives up on any of us***”.