

Eastminster Worship Services

Sunday, May 3, 2009 • 5 p.m. Service

Face to Face: Filthy Language & Longsuffering *“When Lack of Conflict Is Enough”*

Mark 14:43-52

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Language is so important. Without words, we cannot communicate. Words are powerful. We can use them to bless or curse.

This month, we conclude our year-long study in Mark and Colossians 3:8-15 on the theme “Face to Face. Come Closer. Be Changed.” From the pulpit, I will examine the pairings of the words “filthy language” and “patience.”

A simple definition for “filthy language” is any words that are or can be perceived as abusive. A simple definition for “patience” is longsuffering or perseverance.

After Jesus finished praying, he woke up Peter, James and John and told them his betrayer had arrived.

And immediately, as he said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a mob that was armed with swords and clubs.

For those arresting Jesus, bringing a mob armed with swords and clubs seemed to be a wise precaution. The arrest of Jesus illustrates how little the religious leaders understood his teachings. They were convinced he would resist and they were prepared for a conflict.

Judas had given them a prearranged signal: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.”¹ As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. “‘Rabbi!’ and kissed him.”²

The pre-arranged signal was a precaution on the part of those arresting Jesus. They wanted to see Judas interact with Jesus in a way that would confirm to them that this man was, in fact, the man for whom they were looking. So Judas approached Jesus as a follower would be expected to approach his teacher, offering him a greeting and a kiss of respect.

¹Mark 14:44

“‘Am I leading a rebellion,’ said Jesus, that you come out with swords and clubs to capture me?’”³ For Jesus, lack of conflict was enough. The text mentions one incident of conflict. All four Gospel accounts mention the high priest servant’s ear being cut off. Jesus’ presence and a few calming words stemmed a riot.

Remember that even though Jesus is God, he is also a man. Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine. He knew the injustice that was soon to occur. He knew the pain he would be required to endure. Yet, Jesus was passive. No confrontation. No conflict. No filthy language; just patience.

Being and making disciples. That is Eastminster’s mission. Is that really who we are as a church?

You will be hearing more from me in the weeks ahead, inviting you to participate in discovering what it means to be a missional church. Session approved a process at its meeting last Tuesday. Only by becoming “missional” will we live out our mission statement. You will be asked to help shape who we will become as a congregation. I am excited about the process we are about to begin which will conclude by year’s end.

What seems impossible is possible when trusting that the Father knows best. Today, God is speaking very clearly to the Church about societal transformation. We’re in the midst of the biggest crisis of capitalism in 70 years. There’s a lot of economic anxiety in our country, spanning every income category. Sixty-four percent of Americans believe there are more risks that endanger their standards of living today than in their parents’ time. Forty-two percent believe there are more opportunities to move up than a generation ago, compared with 29 percent who think there are fewer. There’s a feeling of greater volatility, both up and down.⁴ Fifteen years ago, the idea of a community being totally transformed through the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a foreign concept. However, according to George Otis, Jr., director of the Sentinel Group, there are over 500 communities that are in some form of quantifiable transformation process today.⁵ Eastminster must become “missional” in its understanding of church in order to be and do its mission statement.

Mark Driscoll, a pastor at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, supports the use of provocative, sarcastic and earthy speech. Few would deny that his colorful style sometimes falls outside the boundaries of propriety. Though he denounces “shock-jock language” as inappropriate, Driscoll repeatedly has shown that he doesn’t shy away from saying things that many would consider overly crude and irreverent.

²Mark 14:45

³Mark 14:48-49

⁴David Brooks, “Yanks in Crisis” in *The New York Times*, Friday, April 24, 2006.

⁵“The Gospel of the Kingdom” in *Today God Is First*, vol. 2 written by Os Hillman, April 3, 2009.

The Bible does have examples of strong language. Take the opening of Galatians where Paul tells a bunch of guys who are into circumcision to go all the way and emasculate themselves. That's probably not something that you're going to have on the flannel-graph for the children in the Sunday school.⁶ Or Ezekiel telling the Israelites that they are whoring after certain people and gods because of the size of their genitalia is very strong language.⁷

I remember one time as a child that my mother actually washed my mouth out with soap. She took me to the bathroom sink, rubbed the bar of soap around in my mouth, and then rinsed it out and made me go to my room. Do you know what I had said? I think I had said, "Shut up!" to my sister.

Now why should my mother wash my mouth out with soap for saying, "Shut up!" to my sister? She did it because she believed Jesus when he said, "What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'"⁸

I had made myself dirty by saying, "Shut up," to my sister, and my mother had a white-hot zeal for my purity. So she used an unforgettable object lesson. "But really!" someone will say, "What's the big deal with saying, 'Shut up,' to your sister? It's not swearing. It's not taking the name of the Lord in vain. It's not a dirty word. What's really so bad about it?"

The answer is that when I said, "Shut up!" to my sister, it was mean. There was no affection and no good will and no kindness in it. It was ugly. There was no moral beauty, no holiness, no love. It came from a garbage pile of pride, one-upmanship, anger and resentment.

Face to face with Jesus. Come closer. Be changed. Refocus your focus on a face to face encounter with Jesus. When the Gospel of the Kingdom comes into a life and a community, everything in its wake is transformed. Lack of conflict is enough. Be missional. Let us pray!

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⁶Galatians 1:6-10

⁷Ezekiel 23

⁸Matthew 15:11