

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

September 15, 2024

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Responsive Reading: Psalm 116: 1-9

Epistle Reading; James 3: 1-12

Gospel Reading: Mark 8: 27-38

Sermon: Ashamed of Jesus

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Don't make a loving God ashamed of you.

Let's go over those scriptures again kind of jumbled together.

From Psalm 116, I love the Lord, because he has heard My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live. From Isaiah 50, The Lord has given Me the tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens My ear to hear as the learned. From James 3, Even so the tongue is little member and boasts great things. See how

great a forest a little fire kindles. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

Now we go to our Gospel. MARK 8: 27-38. Read along.

²⁷ Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?”

²⁸ So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”

³⁰ Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection

³¹ And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and

scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³ But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not [\[a\]](#) mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Take Up the Cross and Follow Him

³⁴ When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

Are we ashamed of Jesus, or should I say are we acting like we are ashamed of Jesus thereby hurting Jesus making Him ashamed of us?

I would like to tell you a story of an incident that happened (or didn’t). It seems that there was this woman maneuvering through traffic at rush hour in a large city. The traffic was

moving at a crawl and several cars were cutting her off, pedestrians were lingering in the crosswalk after the light had turned green, and horns were honking.

Unbeknownst to her there was a police car following her the whole time. When she finally cleared heavy traffic and hit an open four lane highway the policeman behind her turned on his flashers and pulled her over. As soon as she stopped another police car pulled crossways in front of her and a third stopped on her left side just back of her driver's door. All three policemen got out of their cars with their guns drawn. She was instructed to get out of the car and was placed in handcuffs. Then the officer who was following her checked her driver's license and registration. He then called the other two to look at it and after some embarrassed chattering he said to the woman, 'Oh ma'am, I'm so terribly sorry. I saw you swearing and honking and giving the one finger salute to pedestrians and drivers alike. Then I looked at the back of your car and saw the bumper stickers that read, WWJD, and Jesus is the Answer, and God is Love, and Return no man evil for evil, and this one I like, if someone should strike you, Turn the other fender.'" Well, I am terribly sorry but seeing those I just assumed that the car must be stolen."

It may be true that actions speak louder than words, but sometimes inappropriate words can drown out appropriate actions (or bumper stickers).

This is what our scriptures are all about.

In Isaiah, the writer says that God has given him a “tongue” of the learned and in what seems to be predicting Jesus says that he, small ‘h’, or capitol, He sticks up for the right, trusts God even in times where he suffers abuse for doing so.

The Epistle James points out that all too often the tongue is not a “learned” tongue but rather a source of immeasurable harm. This little thing is like a little match that can start a forest fire or a small rudder that can steer a huge ship, either into the rocks or into a safe harbor. The same tongue that praises God is used to curse out people who were made in the image of God. “This ought not to be so.” Aw yeah, do you think?

No spring of water spues forth good clean fresh water and salt water at the same time. This is what God meant to be normal not what some of His children are doing with their tongues. This hurts and offends God and makes God ashamed of His created man not living up to what should be as natural as what that spring is doing. Oh God will not stop loving you, but he will be ashamed. I should add here that denying God is not only saying in words but saying in our actions. Peter rebuking Jesus was not denying in words but denying God by correcting what

he believed was a mistake by God. God does not make mistakes, and when we infer that He does we are denying His sovereignty.

I think the Psalmist says what I'm getting at best of all. The psalmist praises, trusts, thanks and believes in God unequivocally. The Psalmist sets a good example of how we should trust and glorify. After all this is all God asks of us.

Many of us say that is just not in us to go out on a street corner and hold up a sign or raise our voices to brag on Jesus. That is OK with God.

Let me make this a little clearer. I think that all of us in this more mature audience have grandchildren that we love and brag on when ever we get the chance. We love them all but if one of them is falling short in the character business we don't stop loving them we just kind of keep quiet about them. We are quietly ashamed of them in spite of our undying love for them.

I think that God feels the same way about us. No matter how much we love our grandchildren we do not wake up in the morning and say, "I'm going out and evangelize about my grandchildren today." No, we just get up- and go out into the world and if the opportunity arises in a conversation to casually mention the fact that we have the greatest grandchildren in the world, then so be it!

You know what? That is all God wants us to do, and when we do it we are proving that we are not ashamed of God and be assured He won't be ashamed of us. Oh yes, one short aside here. Don't flip people off in traffic and think your bumper sticker will make it OK with God.

Love God with all your heart and soul and strength and let it stick out of you like a sore thumb.

Love God, Hallelujah and Amen.

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