

Lent 2, 2009
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Mark 8. 34 – 38

Jesus said, If you want to become my followers, then deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me. Those who are ashamed of me in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father.

The Word of God.

Grace mercy and peace be multiplied among you in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, AMEN.

If you watch any TV at all these days, you'll notice there are just an awful lot of what might politely be called, talent shows. A lot of talent shows on TV these days, American Idol, comes to mind. Dancing with the Stars. There are cooking contests, modeling contests, contests to see who can stay locked in the same room with these other people the longest, contests to see who can put up with being kicked around by Donald Trump the longest. It takes talent, really. And you watch these shows, I personally can only take them in small portions, but I watch these shows sometimes and I find myself wondering, Is anybody out there, really ashamed of anything anymore? Is anything embarrassing to folks these days? Those poor people on American Idol, the ones who sing like me and couldn't carry a tune in a bucket—what are they thinking? Why are they thinking it? What are they doing, going on national TV, just to be insulted by Simon What's-His-Name, I would be so ashamed after an experience like that. I would be so ashamed I wouldn't be able to show my face in public for years, they actually seem a bit pleased with themselves. Happy to be here, Simon. Is there anything left to make people really and truly, feel ashamed?

Yes there is. Yes there is, and I think I know what it is. How to make people feel embarrassed and ashamed, all I would have to do is take a microphone, walk around the room right now, and start asking people to lead us in prayer. We need some prayer people, we need more God in this place, we're a little bit dead today we need some more God right here right now, how about it, can you pray for us? Can you, right now, pray out loud? Or maybe we could stop right now and sing a hymn—I pick the hymns here each week, I admit that. And when I pick a new hymn that

no one knows I look out over the congregation, and I see a whole tribe of cigar store Indians, “don’t know the song pastor not going to sing.” Next week I pick Beautiful Savior and How Great Thou Art, I look out at you, and guess what? Same tribe of cigar store Indians, “don’t want to sing that one either pastor,” why? What are we ashamed of? Our singing voices? You can’t be any worse than me, and I sing solos. You can’t be worse than me, you can’t be, so what are you ashamed of? Could it be, your faith? Are you embarrassed to let someone know, you actually believe in Jesus Christ and you take this church stuff seriously?

Jesus Christ died on a cross to forgive your sins, we say that here all the time, but just to remind you of what it is that brings us here each week—Jesus Christ died on a cross to forgive you your sins, every last one of them, including the ones that frankly are humiliating and that would cause you to turn beet red if anybody here knew about them. Jesus already does, He died to forgive you, He wasn’t ashamed to love you! He wasn’t ashamed to love you, and to say so. He wasn’t ashamed to follow through on that love for you, hanging there gasping for breath, stripped naked on a cross. Nothing got in the way of Jesus’ love for you—not sin not death not the grave. Not people looking at Him funny, not friends turning away and quietly snickering to themselves, nothing got in the way of His love for you. Nothing would stop Him from giving you the greatest gift of all time. Now you’re hesitant to admit you’d kind of like this gift? You’re slow to receive this gift, because you’re afraid of what other people might think? Really?

Jesus said, Those who are ashamed of me in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them I will also be ashamed, when I come again in the glory of the Father, with all His holy angels. See, the problem these days is not “the world.” The problem is not the world, the world was adulterous and sinful when Jesus walked this earth, it’s adulterous and sinful now, big surprise, we know that, the problem is not the world acting like the world. The problem is when the church is embarrassed to be the church. The problem is when Christian people, are ashamed of their own faith.

What about you? Is faith in Jesus Christ who died and rose again something to be taken

seriously, and to be lived openly? Or are we going to be embarrassed by it. On this day, let it be, that with the help of God we can finally just get over ourselves, and be made fully and completely the people of God through Jesus Christ, for all the world to see and hear—and maybe laugh at, maybe talk about and snicker over—but certainly for all the world to know, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; in whose name we pray, AMEN.