

12 September 21 James 3: 1-12; Mark 8: 27-38

Talking the Talk

If we wanted a title for today's readings and for this short sermon, it would be **Talking the Talk**.

In our gospel reading Jesus challenges his friends to say aloud what they are thinking about who he is. And Peter says it for them all- Jesus you are the Messiah, which is the same word we know as Christ.

Jesus explains to them that as Christ, sent and anointed by God, he has come not to be the victorious warrior they were expecting, but to give his life for all. He tells them this as they are on the way to Jerusalem where he is soon to be crucified, but then to rise, to come back to life again. He demonstrated that true life comes through service and giving, seemingly losing, not through throwing your weight around.

And if Peter and the others are going to talk the talk as Jesus's followers, they need to grasp this. So do we!

Before that gospel passage, we heard from James, who was a pretty straight talking first century church leader . He wrote a letter, on a scroll of parchment, which would have been taken round by messengers and read out to gatherings of Christians in a range of places.

Had James been a 21st century church leader, he would probably have been a blogger with a huge following...

I doubt he'd have taken to Twitter, as he tends to need more than 280 characters to get the point across!

So in today's Blog, or first reading, James is focusing on **Talking the Talk** as Christians. He says that it starts with discipline and training. I suspect those of you here today with a military background will really understand this : training leads to good discipline, which in turn enables you to carry out the work required of you, even when under pressure.

James has several images to help us get this point. Maybe one of them struck you as Evelyn read the passage for us. Here's a reminder.

If you want to train a horse you put a small bit in its mouth.

If you want to train yourself as a Christian, to develop self-control, **tame your tongue.**

The tongue- tiny but very powerful, like a rudder which steers a huge ship. or a spark which starts a forest fire.

Just a few words, one word even, can cause huge pain, or great joy. Try these:

Not again... well done

Typical Thank you!

You are useless I am proud of you

I hate you I love you

Words slip out so easily, that we need to train our tongues, to tame them, like a wild animal.

As parents and godparents, grandparents and all adults whose words will influence young lives, let us be those who speak blessings, not curses, love and encouragement, not criticism and cruelty.

As my mother used to tell me, *if you can't say something kind, better to say nothing at all.*

In a moment I will ask Alfie's parents and godparents if they will care and pray for him and help him to follow Christ, to talk the talk as a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. In fact I will ask everybody here to be part of this, as Alfie joins our church family today

And the reply we will give me is this:

With the help of God, we will.

We can't do this on our own. James gets that when he says we all make many mistakes, and every parent knows that's true. But God will help you and help us all, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to develop self-control, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit which grow in our lives as we follow Jesus and open our lives up to him. A great Christian Saint, Ignatius, developed a habit of thinking through each day with God. Many of you will know this as the Examen. It's a brilliant way to get better at Talking the Talk< so I share it with you now, as wise advice for us all to follow. Five things:

- Towards the end of each day, find a quiet place to pray. Place yourself in *God's* presence and *Give* thanks for *God's* great love for you.
- Pray for the grace to understand how *God* is acting in your life, what *God* might be saying to you.
- Then review your day — recall specific moments and your feelings at the time.
- Reflect on what you did, said, or thought at those times. *Were* you drawing closer to *God*, or further away? *Were* your actions, thoughts and words blessings or curses?
- Finally, look to tomorrow — think how you might collaborate more effectively with *God's* plan. Be specific, ask for *God's* help, and end with a prayer, maybe the Lord's Prayer.

Let us all commit to talk the talk as Christians, so that people hear from our lips the kindness, compassion, patience, truth and love of Jesus.

Amen.