

## Dear Families:

Today we continued our study of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus was talking to His disciples on their way through Galilee. His disciples had told Him that they had seen a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus, but since he was not an official disciple, they told him to stop. Jesus rebukes them, saying that anyone doing good in Jesus' name is on the same team- "who is not against us is for us." He then went on to warn that anyone who leads a child astray would be punished beyond understanding. He also then went on to warn us about sin. Jesus says, if your hand causes you to sin- or, your eye, or foot- cut it off. It is better to live disabled and go to Heaven, then be healthy and be punished for eternity.

This is a tough passage. It is very blunt and harsh- but Jesus wants to drive the point home. If we are followers of Christ, it doesn't matter where we worship or with whom. What matters is that we walk in His way. And if there is anything- ANYTHING- pulling us away from Christ, it has to go! If we are true followers of Christ, then we must follow Christ and nothing else. Even if it's someone or something we really like. If it keeps us from Christ, we need to rip it out by the roots. It's not easy, but Jesus is the only way to Heaven. We can't let anything stand in our way!

Jesus concludes by saying something that sounds unusual to our ears: "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other." Salt was used as a symbol to seal a covenant or treaty back in biblical times. This reference is telling us to make peace with others who follow Christ. Churches don't agree on every practice and creed. But, we are much more effective if we work together. We are on the same team, after all.

I know it seems early, but the class has already begun making plans for this year's Christmas Pageant. They have once again decided to write their own and have begun their script! We hope you can participate- please join us!

Thank you for being with us today!

Carol McClellan, CE Director