

**Rev. David Mercer**

**Homily: 7/19/15**

**16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B: *One Word***

**Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; Mark 6:30-34**

Father Bill Bausch has been one of my favorite preachers. He's a good storyteller. Here's one of his stories – a bit strange perhaps, but it makes a great point.

“God, as everyone knows, creates the heavens and the earth and everything in them. God creates them through the use of words, and words, of course, are power. *Let it be done*, God proclaims, and it's done. And everything God makes is good.

Well, God is especially proud and loving of the man and woman he makes, because He breathes into them a part of Himself, his Spirit. Not surprisingly, the Devil is jealous and angry. So one day, when God is enjoying the humans, the Devil happens to walk by. He saunters up to God and asks Him what he likes so much about these creatures. When God opens his mouth to speak, the Devil craftily puts a bond on his tongue so that He cannot speak! God cannot talk! Since God's creative power is in his words, the Devil has bound that power.

The Devil laughs at God and has his way with the humans. Well, as eons go by, the devil comes back to make fun of God. He scoffs at and taunts this silent God. God responds to all this by holding up one finger.

“One?” asks the Devil. “Are you trying to tell me you want to speak just one word?”

God nods a Yes.

The confident devil thinks to himself, “I don't suppose that even God can do much harm with just one word. OK.” So the devil removes the bond from God's tongue.

And God speaks his one word, in a whisper. God speaks it for the man and the woman, and it brings them great joy. It's a word that gathers up all the love, forgiveness, and creativity that God has in his heart. The word he speaks is *Jesus!*<sup>1</sup>

I repeat what I asked of you last week about the name *Jesus*. I ask you to see yourselves as missionaries in the neighborhoods of our parish. I ask you to take a first step as missionaries by being willing to use the word *Jesus* once a day. Again, there's no copyright on the word, so you and I are free to use it. *Jesus* is the word.

Today's Gospel proclamation speaks of crowds wanting to know where Jesus is and then pursuing him there. They seek him out to fill their emptiness and to fulfill their hopes. Jesus sees the crowds before him as sheep without a shepherd. Sunday to Sunday, we proclaim the Gospel (the Good News) that, even today, Jesus can be that shepherd.

You and I know people who feel empty, people who long for something greater in life, people who want to know that life has meaning. We know people who seek something that can complete their lives.

We know that one word, spoken by God, fulfills people's deepest longing. We know that word to be *Jesus* – Jesus who moved through death to life, removing even death as a wall between God and us. Jesus is God's Word that makes true Communion with God possible.

Teenagers, I ask you to make Communion with God your life's focus. Here's my take on it.

I like being in this sacred space on Sundays. I like being with you. I like being with people who have found a light through whatever darkness there might be in life. I like being with people who willingly buy an extra bag of groceries they can bring before this altar for people in need. I like being with people who, with bread and wine, are willing to lift up their hearts to God in gratitude for the divine life God gives them. I like being with people who recognize that they aren't self-made people but are made by God and called by God to a special mission in life. I like being with people who are willing to give Jesus to other people.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in her later years, gave an interview that speaks to this.

A reporter mentions that Mother Teresa's order of sisters has grown by thousands, and she asks her, "Why?" Mother Teresa answers, "I give them Jesus."

The reporter isn't impressed. "But Mother, I wonder if you offer a special technique." "I give them Jesus," Mother replies.

The reporter tries again: "Yes, we all know of your profound work, but I'm asking if there's something else ... something specific." Mother Teresa holds her ground, saying: "I give them Jesus. There is nothing else."<sup>2</sup>

Mother Teresa is right: there is nothing greater, there is nothing that fills human emptiness better, that fulfills our deepest hopes more completely than God's Word that took on our humanity: *Jesus!*

God's Word – *Jesus!* – becomes our mission in our neighborhoods when we leave this church. Our parish vision expresses it well:

*We choose to follow Jesus Christ, in joy, gratitude, and service.*

---

<sup>1</sup> adapted from Willam J. Bausch, *A World of Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, (Twenty-Third Publications: Mystic, CT, 1998) p. 234-235.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Dr. James B. Lemler, "Seeking Searching, Seeing," *Day1 Radio*, 4/2/06, [day1.org/984-seeking\\_searching\\_seeing](http://day1.org/984-seeking_searching_seeing).