

**- Saint John's Pulpit (June 6, Second Sunday after Pentecost)
- "Divine Communication" Mark 3:20-35**

²⁰ and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." ²³ And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— ³⁰ for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

³¹ Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters^[a] are outside, asking for you." ³³ And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

Dysfunctional Communication

In speaking of Jesus' images, one of the popular ones is that Jesus came to this world to become a good communicator with people. And even with God! He wanted to become a bridge between humans and God. Like the theological term '*vere Deus vere Homo*' Because Jesus was a human being (*vere homo*) and was Divine being (*vere Deus*), people understand that only Jesus could be our Savior to make peace with God and people. Ephesians 2:14-18 summarizes this point very clearly:

¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:14-18 NRSV

However, the Bible presents that Jesus' life and ministry were full of dysfunctional communication seriously! Jesus never was welcomed in his hometown, which means he had a communication issue with people in his hometown.

⁴⁴ (for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in the prophet's own country). John 4:44 NRSV

In addition to this, there was a serious prejudice to see Jesus and his family by people.

³ Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Mark 6:3 NRSV

Jesus also had a communication issue with Jewish religious leaders. In many times, Jesus had to struggle with his disciples because they could not understand his teaching. A careful reading of the Bible makes you see that people who were called by God had their communication issues in their life.

Moses had serious communication dysfunction with his people while he led the Exodus. He had to endure lots of blames, criticisms, grumbling, and danger of impeachment. So, it might be a blessing for him not to enter the Promised Land with his people. Definitely, Moses could have struggled with lots of complaints by the Israel people because the Promised Land was not the one they imagined!

Joseph (Genesis) experienced bad communication with his brothers. Apostle Paul struggled with Jesus' direct disciples whenever the issue of original apostleship was raised among the first Christians which put Paul be in

troublesome communication. So, communication issues were not new in the Bible, especially for those Faith giants!

Now, we see that there is the most serious communication issue in Jesus' life and ministry. It is between Jesus and his family which presented in the text today!

20 and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." Mark 3:20-21 NRSV

Presumably, in the eyes of Jesus' family, he was a religious fanatic. Giving up his business, being irresponsible for taking care of his half brothers and sisters. Moving here and there with a group of men who looked like so-so people! So, there were evidently lots of communication troubles between Jesus' family and Jesus. Lots of options might be in their discussions such as meeting counselors or therapists, taking medicine, and finding mental care unit, and so on.

Isn't it a big irony? The greatest one who can communicate between God and people had a communication issue with his family! To this, Jesus presents his thoughts on communication:

24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. Mark 3:24-25 NRSV

As long as we experience dysfunctional communication, we cannot stand. During the pandemic, I have joined a special clergy group called by Bishop Lewis. In Alexandria District and Roanoke District, Bishop called a group of clergies and asked them to study ministry, leadership, and post-pandemic strategy. This project was planned before the pandemic and in-person meeting plan. But when I began to join this group, it was right after the pandemic. So, I had to join the group virtually. Have you ever experienced a zoom meeting for 8 hours? I have!

In my group, some of the mid-size or big church pastors looked very stressed. Their churches did not begin in-person service at all. Lots of communication and discussion were relayed on and on. Keeping on-line services, or resuming in-person services? If so, when and how? After

Thanksgiving? Or beginning the new year? Nay, from the Lent? Or from Easter Sunday? Even on a Day of Pentecost?

Pastors have been very stressed. My friend got shingles and experienced lots of pains! The point is this. If we try to meet people's standards or expectations, there would be no answer. Of course, it is important to know what people want and need. But we Christians need to meet God's standards and expectations first!

Divine Communication

What about church and ministry? The only way to make churches one community is the moment when we follow God together. When we do this, we feel that we are one family and one body in Christ. Jesus' solution to resolve his communication issues with his family was this. Please look at the last verse.

35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:35 NRSV

When we do the will of God, we become one family, which means can do divine communication feeling one body in Christ. If so, what is the will of God? Love our God and our neighbors! Our faith makes us see not only God but also our neighbors. This does not mean a win-win game, sometimes, requires our tolerance, thoughtfulness, and sacrifice.

With the new guidelines from the CDC, Governor and Bishop about in-person services, it looks like lots of churches are very busy in communication. Mask-on? Or Mask-off? It seems that any direction cannot make all happy.

However, the right answer is always near to us. Worshipping is not like shopping at malls. When you do shopping, you can control your time, and need to focus on your goal only. But worshipping is doing the will of God, period! When we worship, we need to love God and love people more and more. Please remember this. The best way of doing divine communication is to love God and love others.

With that divine communication, let's encourage one another. Let's move forward together with safety, spirituality, and health!