

It's No Secret!

First Sunday in Lent (26 February Anno Domini 2012)
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John 18:19–24

The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.” When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” Jesus answered him, “If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?” Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

How many times have you looked for something but couldn't find it, even though -- it was right in front of you? Maybe you've looked for your keys because they weren't where you expected them. Later, you discovered them on the kitchen counter where you set them. Maybe it was your glasses or sunglasses. They were nowhere to be found. Later you sat down and discovered them right on your head. We husbands claim to be good at finding things, but sometimes we look right at them and never see them. Wives may be quick to say, “It's right in front of you” or “If it were a snake, it would bite you.”

Jesus made a surprising comment as He stood before the Jewish council. He told the Jewish leaders that His teachings had always been in plain sight, right in front of them. He directed those leaders to see His cross reminding them, it was no secret. See His cross! It's no secret!

I. THE TEACHING OF JESUS WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE WORLD.

The teaching of Jesus has always been in plain sight. He spoke often to large crowds. Hundreds, even thousands, had dropped their daily tasks to come to see Him and to hear Him. We remember that Jesus fed four thousand on one occasion and five thousand on another. On one day He stepped into Peter's boat and pushed off a little from the shore. He taught the people from the boat a few feet offshore because the crowd was so large.

Jesus was no stranger to the people of Galilee. Jesus had regularly taught in the synagogues in Galilee because His hometown was in Nazareth. On one occasion Jesus read a portion from the prophet Isaiah from the scroll in the synagogue: ***“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness the prisoners”*** (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:17-19). According to the Scriptures the townspeople originally ***“spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips”*** (Luke 4:22). But the second reaction was not so flattering. They rejected Jesus and were so furious at Him that they were ready to throw him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-29).

Jesus had made His home Capernaum. The people there ***“were amazed at his teaching, because he taught with authority”*** (Luke 4:32). But Jesus didn't limit His work to Galilee and Capernaum. He traveled to Jerusalem and taught in the temple. He went to Jerusalem for the festivals. When He was arrested, He was in Jerusalem because He had come for the Passover. During Holy Week He entered the city to shouts of ***“Hosanna to the Son of David!”*** Jesus was in the temple on Monday and Tuesday, teaching the people there. His message was not hidden from the people. He taught openly wherever He was.

The central message of His teaching was not hidden either. From the very beginning, it had been the message of His cross. John the Baptist had spoken about Jesus and had pointed to Him, saying, **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** (John 1:29). When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, the dove and the voice from heaven had identified Jesus as God’s Son. These events were not done in secret. Many people saw and heard them.

Early in Jesus ministry He met with Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish council. Jesus was clear about His mission. He told Nicodemus, **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life”** (John 3:14,15). If Nicodemus had any doubts about what Jesus meant, Jesus clarified it for him and for us as well. In the next breath, Jesus said, **“God so loved the world so that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16). You know the verse. It’s not hidden even today.

The purpose of Jesus’ coming has always been in plain sight. So it is for us as well. You know the importance of His cross. It is the centerpiece of our message as Christians. It is the heart of your faith. You do not have to look very far to find a cross in this church. It’s part of our singing—not only during Lent but at every occasion when we come together to worship.

The reason is simple. We preach Christ crucified because it is the wisdom and power of God. The message of the cross has saved you because the Holy Spirit has used it to enter you and to work faith in you. We treasure the cross because Jesus suffered there and shed His blood there as payment in full for our sins. We don’t make the cross a secret. It’s the message of our worship every Sunday.

We see the cross and accept no substitutes. I’m not here to share any message other than the message of the cross. You didn’t come here to hear how to lose weight, or how to build a better relationship, or how to have a happier family life. Those things may happen because of your faith in Jesus and your willingness to live your life by the message of the gospel. But the most important message of the true church is that Jesus suffered and died for us all. He was nailed to a cross to pay for your sins. You can get information about losing weight or building better relationships in other places. Here, the message is that Jesus died for us; He shed his blood for us while hanging on a cross so that we would be forgiven and have eternal life. The message of the cross is plain and simple. It’s the same message preached long ago and never becomes outdated.

II. SOME PEOPLE WILL NOT SEE WHAT IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM.

Those Jewish leaders were well aware of what was going on. When John the Baptist urged repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, the Pharisees and Sadducees were there. John spoke the harsh law to them and called them to repentance, **“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham”** (Matthew 3:7-9).

While Jesus was carrying out His ministry, the Pharisees and Sadducees were there sometimes on the edges of the crowds, listening and watching. When Jesus came to Jerusalem for the last time, they were there while He taught in the temple on Monday and Tuesday. Again and again they tried to trap Him into saying something wrong. It was a pattern for those Jewish leaders. They had accused Him of driving demons out by the power of the devil. They accused Jesus and His disciples of abusing the Sabbath. They demanded that Jesus show them some sign that He was who He claimed to be, in spite

of the many signs and miracles He had already done. It's not that they didn't understand what Jesus was saying. They just refused to see the truth.

Jesus had harsh words for them, seeking to help them see what was there before their eyes: ***“Woe to you Pharisees, because you . . . neglect justice and the love of God”*** (Luke 11:42). One Pharisee responded, ***“Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also”*** (Luke 11:45). They would not listen. They would not see. Instead, they plotted not only to dishonor Jesus but to destroy Him. Judas had come and provided the betrayal that would accomplish their goal. So Jesus stood before the high priest and the Jewish leaders, bound as a criminal facing an interrogation. The outcome of this interrogation was not in doubt. They would convict Him, no matter what Jesus said. Their attitude was as Jesus had warned, ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”*** (Luke 13:34).

Now in the presence of those enemies who could not and would not see what Jesus had come to accomplish, Jesus boldly and surprisingly said to the high priest, ***“I have spoken openly to the world. . . I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said”*** (John 18:20-21). His answer so infuriated one of those officials that he struck Jesus in the face. He would not listen. He would not see, for he had no faith in Jesus.

Some people in this world still are not willing to listen. The message of Jesus is still in plain sight. The Bible is the most often purchased book in the world. It has held that position for centuries. Our pastors are ready to share the message of Jesus with anyone at any time. You, as His disciples, share your witness with your families, friends, and neighbors.

We should not be surprised when some will not see what is so clear to us—Jesus died for the sins of the world. Instead, many look for something else. Authors seek to explore the secret message of Jesus' teaching. Television and Internet presentations want to tell us what Jesus was really all about. But they so often move away from the cross. They want to portray a gentler kinder teacher of love. Yet the greatest measure of His love is His bloody sacrifice on the cross for unworthy sinners like you and me. It's there in plain sight, and our most blessed task is to share the message of His deep love with others.

Yes, some will still oppose it. Christians in this world are still often persecuted. We may not experience persecution as others do, but we sense the rejection of others. When we sense the opposition of those around us, we can grow frustrated, throw up our hands, and keep quiet. But that's not what Jesus expects of us. He expects us to continue to share the message of the cross with others. He expects us to keep our doors open for the lost, the lonely, the wounded, and the weary. The only cure for any of them is the cross of Jesus.

We have the privilege of sharing the message of His cross with others. Jesus still wants that message to remain in plain sight! For the sins of the world are clear to see. Man is fallen, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but for the sake of all Jesus went to the cross and died. He paid the price in full for all sin and for your sin. For in Christ Jesus all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, In Jesus name, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
AMEN!