

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Jesus has been healing and preaching followed by crowds, he's called his disciples, he went up the mountain and now he's gone home, and the crowds are back. His family has gone out to restrain him, for they've heard "He has gone out of his mind." Now the actual wording in the Greek text is somewhat ambiguous, we read "his family has gone out to restrain him" but in Greek it conveys that it is those closest to Jesus, maybe family, maybe those in his inner circle, who are going "seize" him, that is deprive him of his freedom. Proximity to Jesus is not a substitute for faith in Jesus, and allegiance to him.

And of course Jesus is obeying the will of the Father, he's following a way that is going to lead to death on the cross, the "way of the cross" which isn't practical or risk-free. He's preaching and proclaiming, healing, touching and cleansing a leper, not kowtowing to Pharisees or scribes, in other words, he's not doing at all what anyone might expect from a teacher, from a prophet, or from the Messiah. He's doing the unexpected, not following the accepted ways of the world of his day.

There are those today who have pretty much the same reaction to Jesus, what's he's done, doing, says doesn't make sense, can't be real, he's out of touch with reality. In the same manner many might think that you and I are also unreasonable, out of touch with reality, after all, how can any thinking individual believe that God became flesh and lived among us, that he died on a cross and was raised from the dead. People like you and me certainly aren't perfect in the eyes of the world. Of course we don't claim to be perfect, just forgiven, saved by grace through faith.

As I was preparing this past week for my Bible study on the gospel of John, I worked on the story of the blind man related in chapter 9 of John. Blind from birth, healed by Jesus and getting the third degree from the Pharisees. Finally he's had enough and says "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." That's faith, I don't understand it, it doesn't make sense, but I have experienced the grace of God, as Luther says in his Small Catechism: "I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel..."

It doesn't matter what secular society, worldly society, or others value and or think. It doesn't even matter what those from other denominations think. We have two sacraments, two "means of grace", Holy Communion and Baptism. To some they might be meaningless, I mean how can you eat the body and drink the blood of Christ? What good does washing in water do? It's not even a matter of good hygiene since we just pour a little water three times on the head of the person being baptized. But of course as you remember from your Small Catechism days back when you were in confirmation: "Eating and drinking certainly do not do it, but rather the words that are recorded: 'given for you' and 'shed for you' for the forgiveness of sin... Whoever believes in these words has what they declare and state, namely, 'forgiveness of sin.'" And regarding baptism, "Clearly the water does

not do it, but the Word of God which is with, in and among the water, and faith... with the Word of God it is a baptism, that is, a grace-filled water of life and a 'bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.'"

Add to these that we are to love our enemies, to love one another as Jesus has loved us, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to love God first and foremost and above all. In addition we are to give to those in need, we're blessed to be a blessing, we are to give and not count the cost. Ridiculous by anyone's standards, right? What about comfort, security, being reasonable? Associate with sinners? Take up a cross and follow Jesus? Serve instead of be served? You must be joking! It's kind of like saying to a pastor stick to theology and preaching Jesus and don't worry about the poor, or the state of people in the world today.

People thought Jesus was out of his mind. I suspect people, some people, worldly people, might think the same about you and me. So let me ask you, are you my brothers and sisters, my dear ones, really out of your mind enough to follow Jesus, to give up what the world thinks important, to love enemies, neighbors, one another, to love God so much that you don't count the cost, are you really out of your mind enough to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

If your answer is "yes", and by the way, my answer is "yes", then Jesus is talking about you when he says "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." No wonder we're a family!

AMEN