

Matthew 17:9

“The Secret is Revealed”

7th Sunday af. Epiphany

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

The headline caught my attention!

“CIA Doesn't Think It's Keeping Too Many Secrets”

What? It sounded crazy. Secrets! That is *WHAT* the CIA is supposed to have. It is the storehouse of secrets.

The CIA or Central Intelligence Agency is one of the primary intelligence-gathering agencies of the United States federal government.

Located in Langley, Virginia, just a few miles west of Washington, D.C., the CIA has three traditional principal activities, which are:

1. Gathering information about foreign governments, about corporations, and about individuals – ***Finding out secrets***;
2. Analyzing that information, along with intelligence gathered by other U.S. intelligence agencies – ***Understanding secrets***;
3. And, upon the request of the President of the United States, carrying out or overseeing covert activities – ***Making secrets***.

[Story of Text]

So see, the CIA knows about secrets. Jesus knows about secrets too.

Coming down the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one!”

Peter, James and John were up on a high mountain.

And before their face Jesus was transfigured – glowed glorious white.

And there appeared Moses and Elijah – the Law and the Prophets.

And the voice – don’t forget the voice from Heaven...

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Matthew 17:5).

And after all of that... Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one!”

Shh.... It's a secret.

The band 10,000 Maniacs sang, "Don't Talk!"

Sergeant Schultz repeated, "I know nothing – NOTHING!"

Shakespeare wrote, "Seal up your lips, and give no words but mum."

And Jesus said, "Tell no one."

[*Secret*]

When Jesus deals with demons, He says, "Tell no one." (Mark 1:34)

When Jesus heals humans, He says, "Tell no one." (Mark 1:44)

When Jesus feels for His disciples, He says, "Tell no one." (Mark 8:30)

This aspect of silence is a part of Jesus ministry.

Particularly at the beginning of His ministry.

Some scholars have called it the "Messianic Secret"
and various explanations have been put forth.

Some are complicated and complex.

Some have suggested Jesus employed "reverse psychology."

I am not sure this was Jesus' intention, but the result was the same.

If I say, "Don't eat the cookie." You want to eat the cookie.

Jesus said, "Don't tell." And in every instance the word spread.

But more likely is the fact that Jesus wanted to keep
"the main thing – the main thing."

James Voelz, professor at Concordia Seminary said it this way:

And I quote his book:

"Much more likely is the concern that miraculous activity such as an exorcism of a demon will lead to false expectations on the part of the [people].... Messianic expectation of a political sort was widespread in first-century AD Palestine, and any miracle performed in the presence of a crowd would only fuel that expectation".

Remember how the crowd wanted to make Jesus king after the miraculous feeding of the 5,000? (John 6:15)

Remember how Gamaliel mentioned the other messianic pretenders that riled crowds and gained support? (Acts 5:36-37)

Remember how Jesus would even conceal Himself? (Mark 1:45; 7:24)

Just as the crowd cannot be incited too early, neither can the authorities,
the Pharisees, the scribes, the Sadducees, or the whole Sanhedrin.
Shhh... It's a secret.

[**Article**] Remember the headline that caught my attention?
“CIA Doesn't Think It's Keeping Too Many Secrets”

The article was about the battle between the CIA and the Senate over how much information about its George W. Bush-era torture tactics should be released. And the CIA doesn't think it's keeping too many secrets.

A secret is held, and there comes a time when it is revealed.

1. You're offered a new job. You accept. You give your two-weeks' notice, and you announce that you are leaving. The secret is revealed.
2. You're pregnant with your second child. You have your son wear an "I'm the big brother" t-shirt to grandma's and grandpa's house, and the secret is revealed.
3. You've bought a birthday gift. It is such a perfect gift, and at the celebration you hand it to the birthday girl and you say, "You've got to open it now." And once the ribbon and paper are shed, the secret is revealed.

In each of these scenarios there was a time to keep the secret.
But that time has come and gone.

[***Secret Told***] A secret is held, and there comes a time when it is revealed.

Jesus' identity and His works were *CONCEALED* – Shh... It's a secret –
until the Lord's death and resurrection are *REVEALED*.

See Him... see Jesus... on His way to Jerusalem,
see Jesus... on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane,
on His way to the early morning Sanhedrin trial,
on His way to stand silently before Pilate,
see Jesus... on His way carrying the cross to Golgotha,
on His way to die,
for you and for me and for all of mankind.

Jesus died. And He rose! Victorious over sin, death and the Devil...Jesus rose!
Now the proverbial cat is out of the bag!
On the first day of the week, Jesus rose early and he appeared to Mary Magdalene.
(Mark 16:9)

And she went and **TOLD**, "Jesus is alive."

And on the road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to two of them
while they were walking in the country. (Mark 16:12)

And they returned and reported it to the rest, the **TOLD**, "Jesus is alive."

And Jesus appeared to the eleven, and He **TOLD** them,
"Go and make disciples...." (Matthew 28:19).

Well my dear Christian friends.
The time to keep the secret has gone! So then, why are so many of us silent.

We talk to our neighbors about the house.
We talk to our co-workers about the boss.
We talk to our classmates about the test.

We talk to our friends about our interest.
We talk to our family about our medical problems.
We talk to total strangers about our favorite movie.

But when it comes to salvation through Jesus....
we act as if... Shh.... It's a secret.
we act as if we are the 10,000 Maniacs singing, "Don't Talk!"
we act as if we are Sergeant Schultz repeating, "I know nothing – NOTHING!"
We act as if we are Shakespeare who wrote,
"Seal up your lips, and give no words but mum."
And we just can't seem to forget Jesus saying, "Do not tell."

BUT It's no longer a secret. So, Go! And tell! The secret is revealed! Amen!

Now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, guard your
hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen!