

## Watch What You Say

I recently received my private pilot's license. During my training I learned how vital it is to communicate clearly your position and distance from the airport where you are planning to land. If you are communicating with a tower it gives the air traffic controller an idea of where to look for you and how to help you avoid other airplanes that may be in the area. If there is no control tower, then clearly announcing your direction and distance from the airport will help other pilots in the area to be on the look out for you. The whole idea is to be safe when entering the traffic pattern around the airport. If you say the wrong thing, you can cause an accident and then neither you nor the person who hit you is going to be having a very nice day.

Sometimes you may think you know where you are, but you are wrong. Then your even though in your own mind you are communicating clearly, you are communicating false and dangerous information. I witnessed a pilot who was landing at an airport and happened to be flying the same direction I was make that mistake. He said was on a downwind leg for runway 15, when he was on a downwind leg for runway 33, in the opposite direction. Since we were going to land on the same runway, my instructor called the offending pilot and pointed out his error. He apologized and announced the correct position. No harm done, but lesson learned. **You need to know where you are, and what you are doing before you open your mouth.**

In today's Gospel lesson, Peter and the other disciples learned a similar valuable lesson. Know where you are and what you are doing before you open your mouth. As the James

epistle points out your mouth can get you into so much trouble, and Peter's mouth was no exception. Peter and the disciples had just finished a discussion about who people said Jesus was, then Jesus asked them to say who they thought Jesus was. Peter's answer pleased Jesus because it was inspired and correct. Peter said, "You are the Messiah". Then Jesus told them not to tell anyone because of things that were going to happen in the near future. Here is where Peter got off course. He was correct that Jesus was the Messiah, but he was wrong in thinking that Jesus was going to be the kind of Messiah that Peter wanted. He got the position correct, but he was sure heading the wrong direction. Peter probably wanted a conquering hero—someone who would lead the army of Israel to greatness and power like it once had. Peter was looking for a Messiah he could die for, not one that had come to die for him. Isn't that what we all want, the chance to be a hero—the chance to give ourselves over to something that makes us look good?

Think about all the ways that being associated with Jesus could puff up the human ego of the disciples. Especially if Jesus was the one who was going to lead Israel to worldwide dominance. Jesus was a miracle worker. Jesus confounded the pious and self-righteous religious leaders of the day. Jesus was a popular speaker and teacher and so just being included in his inner circle would raise anyone's status. So was Peter really just interested in saving Jesus from death or was he interested in protecting his own status? Jesus knew the answer and Jesus publicly rebuked Peter the same as he would any of us if we got the same ideas in our heads.

If we think that we can follow Jesus to improve our social status, or our gain some sort of advantage or our peers

because we are believers---if we think that we can save our own lives, especially the life that we think others might see— then we are going to lose. We can't be worried about what others think about us and follow Jesus. By the same token we can't be going around treating others as if they don't exist or using them for our own personal gain and think that somehow, we are following Jesus.

Jesus makes it very clear that we must carry whatever it is that is going to cause our death with us (He says take up your cross) and follow him so that we like him can receive a reward that is eternal. What good does it do to give our lives and gain the world? The world will not last forever. If we give our lives to Jesus now, when he comes again in glory he will give them back and we get the world too.

Let's make sure that we are working for Jesus for the right reasons. As the book of James concludes at the end of the third chapters: **James 3:13-18** <sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. <sup>16</sup> For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.