

Sunday 25th June 2023; Family Benefice HC, Oswaldkirk

Some words we say every time we begin a service of Holy Communion, “Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden.”

(Hold up Safe Key) Can anyone tell me what this key opens?

A safe... What do we keep in a safe? Things of value like money or jewels, or important papers. We lock things in safes to keep them secret, in a safe place where no-one else can find them.

Have you ever kept a secret? Secrets are things we know that we keep all to ourselves - and don't tell anyone else. Secrets are thoughts and words we lock up and keep in a kind of safe, so nobody knows. Everyone has secrets - sometimes we keep secrets for good reasons - like to keep from hurting someone's feelings or to keep from ruining a special surprise (like what's inside a present). Or there are some things we should never keep secret. What if someone asked you to do something that wasn't right - or was doing something very dangerous? Would you keep that a secret? Who would you tell? A parent, teacher, maybe.

In our church service we always say the Confession - when we think about our secrets and things that are making us unhappy or guilty and we offer them to God. On other occasions a person might come to me the priest and ask to speak about something that is troubling them or feeling guilty about in order to get it off their chest and receive the prayer of absolution, to bring forgiveness and peace.

In today's scripture story, Jesus does a lot of talking about secrets and tells us about one very important thing he wants us to be able

to tell anyone, something he never wants us to keep secret. He tells them that the words he has shared with them should then be shared by them, later, with everyone. He also says to “acknowledge” him in their lives. Or, put another way, “don’t keep what you know about Him a secret.”

Finally, Jesus tells his disciples that it might seem easier to keep his words a secret because that will seem safer for them. Because, when they do share his words, not everyone will be happy to hear those words. Thankfully the disciples listened to Jesus! They did not keep what they knew about Jesus a secret. Instead, they shared Jesus’ words and actions with others! Because they shared what they knew about Jesus and who Jesus was, others since over two thousand years have been able to receive and know God’s healing, hope, and love - including us!

Just like the disciples shared with others, we can also share our own words and actions of God’s healing, hope, and love that we’ve learned from Jesus. Instead of keeping these words and experiences that bring life to this world locked up like in a safe, we can do just like the disciples did and share those words and experiences of Jesus with the world.

We share his love in two ways: in what we say, we can tell people about God’s love. We can and should always what I call speak life, of God’s love and hope and bring life, by what we do, by living by God’s way and loving others as He loves us. Then, if we think carefully about the things we say and do, speak life, and bring life, and always remember the things that Jesus has taught us - then we can be sure that God’s love is never a secret.

Amen.

