



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 4, 2018

Jesus at Work/Our Work

Mark 1:29-39

Jesus life must have been pretty hectic in those first days of mission. Imagine it! He is settling in, if not down, and Mark records the story in fast dollops of powerful images.

- **Baptized.** John the Baptist is the marker between the promise of old and the coming of the new beginning; repentance is the theme; crowd response was overwhelming. And along the way came Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. The words heard by him were "Beloved Son, my delight!"
- **Tempted.** In the wilderness for 40 days and "the angels were serving him."
- **First Sermon.** Jesus hits Galilee with a pretty direct message: "Time is now full, here comes the kingdom of God, repent, believe the gospel." Urgency marks this rabbi!
- **Call of the First Four.** Recruitment season by the Sea of Galilee. Simon and Andrew were casting; James and John were mending nets. "Follow me," said Jesus and they did immediately! Ring of authority! Jesus sees, calls, and they move!

{Now recall that Mark is the first of the Gospels to be written, between 66-70 CE/AD; in Rome to the house church of which John Mark was likely a member. It is probable that Mark was mentored in Faith by Peter.}

Our Gospel marks Jesus' first day at work. And what it day it turns out to be; no rest for the called ones!

At Synagogue. In Capernaum. Rabbi Jesus teaches. People were amazed at his skill. A man possessed interrupts. "Jesus of Nazareth, did you come to destroy us, we know you are the Holy One of God." Jesus: "Silence, come out of him." Healed. All were amazed and wondered about HIS POWER WITH AUTHORITY. Word spread!

At Home. Jesus was no doubt ready for a rest and they entered the home of Simon's mother-in-law. Peter's House is well known. Likely the place where Jesus would live in His Galilean ministry days. It is helpful to remember that as Jesus' Way took root, even into the earliest after Pentecost days, house churches were the places of Christian beginnings.

Diagnosis---Prognosis. Things are not well; no rest for the called; and Simon's mother in law was bedridden with a fever. Ever had a fever? This one is far more than "take Tylenol, stay hydrated, and rest."

“Fever.” In those times a diagnosis, seeing into would imply possession of evil, sickness was thought to be that more than just a medical thing---it was the leading edge of death.

The short account is all told in the third person as if Mark had heard the account directly from Simon. And, wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles.

Jesus hears, Jesus went, Jesus sees, took hold of her, raised her up, fever gone, and (prognosis, seeing out of) SHE SERVES THEM.

Once life is touched, healed, the net result is to witness and to serve. The Mission Statement, it would seem, of those who walk with Jesus.

Summary of the First Day=Evening, sunset, whole city (Guessed to be about 1500 through the estimate of the archaeologist!) at the door and Jesus healed many of them.

Into the World---A Healing Mission. But the last verses many be the point. Here is Jesus, in the midst of the powerful Roman world; the earliest believers in the face of the power and authority of the state in John Mark’s time.

It is likely that Jesus’ actions are more about our mission today than His mission with the first disciples---

Mission begins with prayer. Just before morning has broken, still dark, He “went out and went away” to pray. To the wilderness. Place of revealing of temptation and of divine power!

Mission continues and Simon seeks Him out with the words “All are looking for you.” As Jesus spoke with authority and acted with the power of healing for the good of all. Seeds were sown and it was time to move out, get on “to the neighboring towns” to witness and act there too---locally, globally and to witness until the whole world knows of the forgiving and healing love of God we share in Jesus.

I believe that the story of Jesus’ work is our work in this present time---to be the Church, resolute and clear in our mission, our witness, our life in Christ.

Remembering anew that calling, we set apart a new Congregation Council. How blessed to have 11 candidates for 6 positions. I know, elections are hard in the church. But, each of those who agreed to serve if elected were already engaged in areas of ministry.

That is the power of the lives of those who have been touched by Jesus and live in Christian community and fellowship.

Time and again, I hear and experience that one the many hallmarks of our congregation is that we are deeply relational in sharing our gifts given that other might hear of and know of and experience the love of God in Jesus through our serving.

Each of us is engaged in a stewardship of the gifts God has given us. On this Lord’s Day, it is as if Jesus the Healer makes a house call.

With Word and Table, Jesus settles us back into lives forgiven and set free. From the sin-sickness of self-absorption, the words of life send us into a life-giving living in the world.

And through our worship, the Holy Spirit lifts us up from the anxiety and fear that the world breeds, that we might move out with confidence; and we are never alone and the life we share is the antidote to cultures that tempt us to believe that we are not enough, do not have enough, to change the direction of the cultures that lure us into the pathways of fear.

Too often, I sense the Christian communities are seen as places of failure or rigidity which refuses to risk being the grace note in the trends that face us in our times. When we work from deficit it is tough to be lifted up, to be bold, and take long strides in confidence that God already has our futures set before us on the horizon.

The Gospel healing is about moving into serving. She, don't miss that, served them. Healed and whole she resumed a life of discipleship. An example for us even today.

From prayer and serving, I am often surprised that the world does not come rushing to our doors to ask "How can you love so?" Our response, "We have been with Jesus!"

The Holy Spirit mobilizes the Christian community to be deployed outside of ourselves. Not lost in the paralysis of analysis. Slowly plotting where we think we should to, but seeking where God in Christ would have us to go---even to the ends of the earth.

It is Epiphany for a bit more time. A season where in the darkness and overcast world, we let our love renew us as a people reconciled, past forgiven, the present a slate of opportunity, upon which we do well to be healed healers in Jesus' name, we do "it all for the sake of the gospel, so that we may share in its blessings," Amen.