

Sermon for February 8, 2015

When I look at the Gospel readings from last week and for this week; I wish that the people who had put together the lectionary would have kept them together as one reading. They are an excellent example of how Mark pairs his healing stories. Last week we heard the story of the man who was possessed by an evil spirit and healed by Jesus. This week we see that Peter's mother-in-law is ill and Jesus heals her.

Last week Jesus was teaching in the synagogue with his own authority, not like the scribes who just quoted other rabbis to prove their point. While Jesus was teaching a man with an unclean spirit who was seated in the assembly rose up and began to yell at Jesus. The evil spirit within him knew who Jesus was—although the disciples and others in the synagogue did not! Jesus commands the unclean spirit to be quiet and to come out of the man—which he does with much convulsing and crying out.

And here is where we meet up with Jesus today. They have left the synagogue and are now at Simon Peter's home where upon entering they find Peter's mother-in-law so ill that she is in bed and can't get up. Having compassion for her Jesus takes her hand and gently lifts her out of bed—healed. By now Jesus has broken so many of the rules; he healed the man in the synagogue on the Sabbath and before the Sabbath was over he healed Peter's mother-in-law. He not only healed her; he touched an ill person making him unclean and he touched an unrelated woman!

But none of that bothered the rest of the town because at sundown they all came to Peter's home to have Jesus heal all who were sick with various diseases and possessed by demons. As he cast out the demons Jesus wouldn't let them speak because they knew who he was. After all of this Jesus finds a secluded spot to pray and refresh himself. This is the pattern of Jesus' life. He puts himself in the middle of the suffering people and then takes time away.

This is the pattern of our lives too. During the week we go out among the people we know and the world around us and gather up their suffering. We draw their hurts and worries and concerns into ourselves like we inhale the air around us. And then we come here on Sunday to exhale the hurts and worries and concerns at the foot of the cross and to inhale the goodness of the Lord. We hear from the prophet Isaiah that there is no power in all of creation that can stand up to our God. We hear of Jesus' healing power in our reading from Mark; the same Jesus who offers himself to us in the Word, in the waters of Baptism and the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

At least that's the way it should work. We're very good at going out into the world and helping others and taking on their problems, but we don't take the time to come to the foot of the cross to relieve ourselves of those burdens and to renew ourselves for the tasks of the week to come.

When we don't take the time to pray and reflect it becomes easier to miss the voice of God telling us that we are beloved sons and daughters; that God is pleased with what we are doing. When we don't take the time to pray and reflect we don't have the strength to tell the demons to be quiet. We hear them

whispering into our ears that we aren't good enough and never will be good enough for God to love us. We hear them telling us that we don't belong and never will belong to God's family. We let them separate us from the hopes and dreams that God has planned for us.

Jesus heard and believed the voice of God telling him that he was beloved and well pleasing enabling him to silence the demons and heal all of those who came to him in despair. Jesus knew who he was and whose he was by being in conversation with the Father. Prayer gave Jesus the strength to carry on; it kept him focused on his mission allowing him to silence all who would keep him from it.

We have been given the same opportunities and the same resources. How are you going to use them this week?