

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany B 2012
Text: Mark 1.29-39

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The text is written in of the 1st chapter of Mark

1:29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.

31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.

33 And the whole city was gathered around the door.

34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him.

37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."

38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The question often arises "**Who is in charge here?**" We often would like life to make sense, and it feels good to know that we are in charge or that someone we can trust is in charge of any given situation. Yet the real truth is sometimes things spin out of control in the world of politics and in congregations. Wars, cancer cells and conflicts of all sorts make so much havoc in our lives that it is hard to believe that God rules as King over this world and our lives. Our text from Mark for this Fifth Sunday in Epiphany is bluntly honest about the hard things people go through and about our pleas for help. The Gospel is just as strong in proclaiming that Jesus Christ has come to reclaim this world and its people for God and thereby make things right. Jesus Christ has come to do battle with sin, death and evil in all the forms it takes.

Our text from Mark along with last week's gospel reading form a day in the life of Jesus in the city of Capernaum. **On this one-day we see Jesus teaching in synagogue, healing in the**

synagogue in a very public way, moving to Peter's house and healing his mother-in-law, healing others at the door of the house as well as withdrawing to pray and then moving on to preach in other places. All of these events are connected to different aspects of the rule of God as king. Sometimes Jesus teaches about it, sometimes Jesus heals in the name of the kingdom rule of God, sometimes he preaches about it, and finally sometimes Jesus withdraws and prays for it. To understand who Jesus is we have to understand his identity as connected to living out and being present to the rule of God as king. No matter what form Jesus' response takes to the situation he lives out the presence of God's kingdom rule.

What our text from Mark's gospel signals is just what happens when God's rule breaks in our world and into the lives of real people. Mark who uses more miracles than any other gospel makes it clear that something powerful is happening in the person of Jesus. Jesus is described as teaching with authority. He speaks and acts decisively, effectively and calmly. He acts with compassion as he brings the healing power of God into the lives of people both publicly and privately. He confronts the power of the demons that keep people enslaved and sets them free in the acts of healing, in acts of power.

As Jesus teaches and preaches he also has to do acts of power, which are healing as a clear indication of the presence of the power of God who rules as king, in other words, the kingdom of God. So important to the telling of the story of Jesus from Mark's perspective is the telling of these miracles of healing that for the next few weeks we will hear of one healing after another. The connection of the healing power of Jesus and the rule of God as king will get firmly fixed with the telling of these stories. This begs the question for us: **How do we manifest the healing power of God?** Is the connection of the healing power of God in Jesus and the ministry of Zion Lutheran Church firmly fixed? **What is the role of healing in our ministry?** What is the

place of public anointing services or private laying on of hands in the hospital room or at the home proclaim the gospel? How do we understand the role of the parish Nurse in our teaching, preaching and healing in the name of the kingdom of God?

Then in the story we can see there is couple of different responses to the healing power of Jesus. One is of the responses is made by Peter's mother-in-law and the other response is made by Peter himself. In the first response at the beginning of the story we are told of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. All we know is that she has a high fever and she is lying in bed. Jesus takes her by the hand and raises her up. Mark uses the same phrase-raises her up for the healing of Peter's mother-in-law as he does for the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus brings her new life. Her response to the presence of this new life is described as and **she began to serve them**. One might say Jesus couldn't stand to see a woman just lying around, so he had to heal to just get supper, but I won't. Peter's mother-in law makes the response of the faithful disciple. In fact in Mark's gospel it is the women who continually and consistently make the faithful response. She quietly and faithfully serves just as a disciple would.

In the mean time we are told by mark that Jesus continues to heal in some very public ways. That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. Jesus is a success and its happening right there at the door of Peter. Jesus is healing everybody and he is confronting the demons, which have kept people in enslaved and now they are free. What is Jesus response to this? Jesus gets up anywhere between 3 am and 6 am and goes out to pray in what is described a lonely place. The same language is used to describe the place where he meets the evil one in his temptations. Jesus

following the psalms advice goes and prays privately With God. Prayer is an important component of the ministry of Jesus. He will not keep faithful to his ministry without it, and the truth is neither will we here at Zion.

Here is Jesus praying and now enters peter with the second response to the healings by Peter. Now we are not sure if this was Peter's idea or maybe the leader of the kwanis or rotary or shrinners maybe they come and tell Peter, Hey your pretty important with this guy Jesus. If we keep him here we can put our town on the map. Remember he is doing all the healing at your house Peter. So where is he? No Peter got to find him the word used are and his companions hunted for him and when he does Peter says to Jesus: **"Everyone is searching for you."** The disciples are enamored with the public response. Peter wants to not to be a disciple but the manger of Jesus' public appearances. They can't figure out why Jesus would miss all this to just pray out there by himself.

It is out of his time of prayer, out of his time of being alone with God that Jesus is able to make his response to Peter and his companions. Jesus has reoriented himself. He turns to Peter and the rest and says, **"Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."** He is basically saying to Peter nope we won't dwell here. Let you and me and the rest leave this place on move on. Our identity is not found in the fact that: **"Everyone is searching for me."** **The reason that Jesus came** was to proclaim the message to others. Jesus will not be kept among the people of Capernaum. He will not be kept as a secret from others. Jesus is aware others need to hear and experience the power of the good news that God rules as king and he is asking peter and the rest to move on with him. That's way the text ends with the summarizing statement: **And he went throughout**

Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. This was Jesus mission and it is our mission too.

Clearly Zion congregation is here to carry the good news of God rule as King as seen in the person of Jesus. Like Jesus we maybe tempted to stay where we have success and stay within our little place in this town or stay with the people we like and know. If we keep Jesus to ourselves then we will not be faithful to the following our Lord Jesus Christ for we will be more like Peter in the text rather than his mother-in-law. We will not bring healing to the lives of those who need it most the people who are still looking for Jesus outside our walls. Mark's gospel is calling us to look beyond this place where we have rehearsed the good news and go to places in our lives, in our families, in our neighborhoods or places that we work and bring the good news of Jesus Christ and the presence of God as king.

In many ways we have made a good start here at Zion and yet the text calls us to continue to widen our horizons outside ourselves. Yes we do bring healing into the lives of people thru laying of hands, through the parish nurse, thru the confession and absolution, thru preaching and teaching, but let the desire for God move us on to reach those who have not yet heard or responded to god's invitation in Christ. Let us move on together in Christ and share our faith stories of our God sightings in new places.