

**The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**  
February 12, 2017  
Christ the Rock Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Farmington, NM

**Mark 1:29-39** And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed 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 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." 39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

**"Just Let Jesus Do His Job"**

The phone keeps ringing and interrupting the project you're working on. Your boss reassigns you to a new emergency before the last one has really been finished. A co-worker calls in sick - again - and you're left trying to do her job and your own. So when people ask what you do, you wonder if you should tell them you keep busy with constant distractions or your actual job, the job you applied for and the job you were hired to do.

Jesus must have felt that way. Ok, we realize Jesus never really clocked in and clocked from his assignment as our Savior. We don't picture him putting someone on hold and asking John the Baptist if he could handle this situation. But what was Jesus really supposed to be doing? I mean, we know he could have kept busy 24/7 without ever having to worry about feeling lazy. There were always people who needed his compassion and power. There were always ears that needed to hear about God's kingdom and hearts starving for his message of hope. But just because Jesus is the Swiss Army knife for our spiritually needy world, doesn't mean he could do everything all at the same time. Jesus knows his ultimate mission and keeps focused even when pulled in so many different directions. So today, let's just let Jesus do his job.

Mark 1:29-39 gives us a glimpse into the more personal side of Jesus. Jesus has been doing his work of preaching and teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum. Now he goes to the personal home of Andrew and Simon Peter. He could be going there to relax or enjoy a meal or just spend time with his inner circle of friends. But Jesus is never off duty. We don't know if he notices that Peter's mother-in-law is absent from the rest of the family or if they come directly to Jesus with a request to help her, but her medical condition must have developed to the point where the family was pretty concerned.

Jesus doesn't tell the family not to bother him. He doesn't ask if it can wait until later or after he's had the time to just unwind for a few minutes and kick off his sandals after a long day. No, he doesn't hesitate. He doesn't offer excuses. We learn this simple response: **"And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them."** (Mark 1:31)

ESV) It doesn't sound that impressive to us. But this simple act of compassion speaks volumes. First of all, many of the religious leaders of the day were so focused on their own ritual purity that they made special efforts to stay away from the sick and disabled and people suffering from common emotional troubles. Jesus isn't repulsed by the potential of being contaminated by the sick, the obvious sinner or even those with deadly and incurable diseases like leprosy. Secondly, he has the power and the will to give her an immediate recovery.

But if you're Simon Peter and the other disciples, you have to wonder how much is enough? This simple act of compassion didn't end with Simon Peter's mother-in-law: **"That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons."** (Mark 1:32-34) Jesus isn't just compassionate in the use of his power. He is generous beyond any reasonable expectation.

Do you know any untouchables? You've probably heard of people in other cultures who are so looked down on that no one wants to associate with them. But in our culture we treat people as untouchable who are so good we can never hope to reach their level of excellence. People who are just in a different league than we are - Super Bowl MVP quarterbacks, nuclear physicists, silicon valley tycoons, people who can get toddlers to behave. They are so great we feel like we would never approach them. And we can develop that sense of awe toward Jesus. But that's the one thing in this episode at the home of Andrew and Simon Peter. Jesus never gives anyone reason to treat him like he's untouchable. So if you ever struggle with a problem, if you ever ask yourself if you should come to Jesus with something that seems small and unimportant, the answer is yes! If you have a serious issue and you don't know if you should bring this terrible problem to Jesus, the answer is still yes! Whenever you have something happen in your life or any type of care or concern, the answer is always yes! You can always come to Jesus. He wants you to. He invites you to. That's what he's there for. Bring your burdens to Jesus and let him do his job.

Yet Jesus is full of surprises. And here's where I'll insert a shameless commercial for reading your Bible. If you don't regularly sit down and read your Bible, start this week spending 5 minutes reading your Bible. If you've done a little, challenge yourself to read through the entire Bible. And even if you've read through the Bible cover to cover, keep going. You're going to find something you didn't know before. Or you'll be struck by something that never really impacted you before. That's what happened to me when I first read through this section of Mark chapter One.

We understand Jesus is all about using his compassion to help people. That is his job. But then this is the surprising follow up: **"And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed."** (Mark 1:35 ESV) The miracles of Jesus demonstrate the rule and reign of God has arrived in the person of Jesus. People are coming to him. Streaming to him. They aren't intimidated or frightened by him. Then Jesus withdraws to desolate places under the cover of night. What is he doing? Why did he do it? It could be that Jesus is a reluctant hero. Maybe he's like the introverted billionaire who doesn't want to be bothered or the Super Bowl MVP who craves some personal time with family away from the crowds and adoring fans.

I mean, has Jesus forgotten his job? Peter sure seems to think so. We learn: **"And Simon and those who were with him searched for him."** (Mark 1:36 ESV) Actually, it's more accurate to say Simon Peter hunted Jesus down. He leads a pack hunting for Jesus. And then they finally corner Jesus: **"they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'"** (Mark 1:37 NIV2011) Sounds kind of like a scolding, doesn't it? Jesus, don't you realize how popular you've become? Don't you realize we are on the verge of something huge? If Jesus would just stay put for a little while, his following would keep growing. More and more people would keep coming to him. More and more miracles, healing upon healing would help develop his reputation. Pretty soon he'd be able to take over the world. Doesn't Jesus understand his own job?

I'm with Simon Peter on this one. I want to hunt down Jesus too. I want Jesus to fix what's wrong with me, solve all my issues. I want to be able to capitalize on his popularity and take advantage of the attention and adoration Jesus is getting. But is that really his main job? My personal Jesus turns into a fairy-god-Jesus or a genie in a lamp Jesus. I've got my own ideas about Jesus. Yes, Jesus shows compassion for hurting people. Yes, Jesus reaches out to people in their need. Yes, Jesus generously uses his power for all those who come to him. But his main job is so much more than that.

Here's where it is fascinating to remember Jesus is 100% God and 100% human at the same time. Jesus knows the end goal of what he came to this earth to accomplish. And yet, because of his humanity, the next steps might not have always been obvious. You know that feeling if you have ever been saving up for a new car, but you still have to wonder if you should go out and buy a brand new TV. You're trying to pay off your credit card bill, but you really want to go out to a restaurant tonight. For Jesus, the primary purpose of his ministry is proclamation. Jesus retreats from the crowds. Out in the desolate place he prays for guidance about his next steps in the work he knows he needs to do.

And that's the main problem with our tendency to turn Jesus into a fairy or genie. We are avoiding the real reason why he came. All the problems that pop up in my life, all the issues I keep wanting Jesus to solve for me just prevent me from addressing the real, the most significant issues in my heart. All the surface-level, superficial issues are just the symptoms. When I keep bringing them to Jesus it just shows my fearfulness in addressing my deeper spiritual needs. And most of the time we don't even realize what we're doing, much less why we're doing it. We treat the superficial because we don't want the pain of treating the real heart issues of sin infecting our hearts. Sin that stays with us, and left untreated, can cause our spiritual ruin, spiritual death.

But the scary part of coming to Jesus with your deepest needs is also the fun part. See, Jesus isn't a 21st century celebrity craving any and all attention. Jesus knows his job. Jesus knows what you really need from him: **"Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come."** (Mark 1:38 CSB) Jesus must keep focused on the good news from God. The attitude of the people and their emphasis on his dealings may have actually detracted from his mission. Jesus knew his job: **"And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons."** (Mark 1:39 ESV) God's rule and reign must come to human hearts through the proclamation done by Jesus. Spiritual forces standing in Jesus' way must be overcome and removed.

Proclamation of Jesus provides a better healing than the one we are after. Come to Jesus, he's not untouchable. But come to him with repentance that admits to the root of sin in your heart. Only Jesus has the cure. Only Jesus volunteered to shoulder the burden of all of your sins, the consequences of the sin infecting your heart. And only Jesus could pay the price to cleanse you of your sin, making you pure to stand guiltless before you God. That's Jesus' job. He proclaimed the work for sinful souls. He proclaimed his gift of the ultimate cure for your heart. Just let Jesus do his job.

Sometimes it's hard to remember what you are supposed to be doing when you are watching a spectacle like the Super Bowl. It seems like a three ring circus with so much action going on in so many different places. Is it the announcer or the sideline reporter? Maybe the commercials or celebrities in the stands? Should you focus on what the defense is doing or follow the quarterback? Thankfully, some of that confusion is taken away when the producers choose the camera shot and the camera man zooms in where they want us to focus. Jesus zooms in on his real work for us in these verses of Mark chapter one. Jesus comes to proclaim, to herald his work as the Messiah. Though he healed many, he was not primarily a healer. Though he cast out demons, he didn't come primarily as an exorcist. No, his mission was to rescue sinners. Jesus came to seek and save what was lost. Through everything that happens in your life, just let Jesus do his job. He came to save you. Amen.