

Reflection - The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
04-02-2024
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- Isaiah 40: 21-31 God is the creator of all and above all,
 Those who's hope is in God will not grow weary.
- Psalms 147:1-11 The Lord delights in those who put their Hope in God.
- 1 Corinthians 9: 16-23 Paul tries to be all things to all people, so that by all possible means some might be saved.
- Mark 1: 29-39 Jesus heals Peter's mother in law
 He heals others, prays and preaches in Galilee

Introduction

As we focus on Mark's Gospel this year, we will be reminded that this is a book filled with action.

Although we have heard just 11 verses in the first chapter today, what we've heard is full of action.

Today, I'd like us to explore a couple of verses at a time, so we can have a look at each of the actions of Jesus in the reading, and to see how, what Jesus did and taught then, is relevant for us here today.

The Healing of Simon's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31)

Firstly, the Healing of Simon's Mother-in law.

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.

Now, some might look on this miracle healing of Simon's mother-in-law as chauvinistic. Some might look at this story and think, "The poor woman, there she is sick in bed, and Jesus only gets her up so she can come and wait on them".

Whilst this may appear the case for us in the 21st century, I think we need to look at this story in the context of the cultural setting of the time. If this was the home of both Simon and Andrew, it was probably typical of a first century Jewish dwelling with a number of family units. There were possibly a number of family units as we would see them, spread over three generations.

If Simon had a mother-in-law, it would seem logical he also had a wife, And Andrew may also have had a family of his own. Simon's mother-in-law was possibly the matriarch of the family unit.

In the cultural setting it would not be demeaning, but rather an honour as the senior woman of the family house to be the host for guests. To be laid up in bed and not be able to perform in your role would have caused more than only physical pain.

So, if we look at this story, how do we know if we are healed. This might seem like a strange question. For some it might seem like it has a very simple answer. It was when the fever left, or when I had the operation to remove the cancer, or when there was no more pain in my leg. Let's look at that last sentence again.

"The fever left her, and she began to wait on them."

As she was healed, she immediately began to serve others. Might it also be for us that we know we are healed when we are able to look beyond ourselves. When we are able to focus, not just on ourselves, but also on others and be enabled to help them in their need.

Many Healed (Mark 1:32-34)

Let's now look at how Jesus healed the sick and the demon possessed.

³² That evening, at sunset, 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.

Jesus was a healer of people. This was one of the things that made Jesus stand out. As Christians we are called to be people who seek to be healers. Healers not just of the physical, but also of the spiritual.

And why did Jesus not let the demons speak? We can't know for sure Jesus's reasoning behind this, let's look at some possible explanations :-

- Jesus wanted to show his power over them.
- So people would believe by what Jesus said and did.
- So Jesus could be revealed as the Messiah, in God's time not Satan's.

In these healings we are given a great demonstration of the healing power God can have in our lives.

Jesus Prays (Mark 1:35-37)

Let's now look at how Jesus spent time in prayer.

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.'

Here we see Jesus doing the reverse of the action and healing we've just witnessed. We hear of Jesus retreating to a solitary place. This was something recorded by the Gospel writers as integral to the ministry of Jesus.

Throughout the Gospels we hear how Jesus found renewal in prayer, and how Jesus made time to pray. Today we even hear how the disciples had to go hunting for him because he was off praying.

When was the last time someone had to go out hunting for you, because you were off praying?

If it was important for Jesus, the Son of God, to spend time in prayer then surely it is even more important for us to be people who prioritize making time for prayer in our lives.

Jesus travels and preaches (Mark 1:38-39)

Finally let us look at how Jesus travelled and preached.

³⁸ He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring 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.

Jesus came to point people to Himself. Yes, he healed many as a sign of who he was, but his main purpose was to proclaim who he was, and that through his life, death and resurrection, all of humanity might be drawn to God. Jesus' ministry included physical healing, but it extends so far beyond. In him there is the offer of not only being healed physically, but also spiritually, fully, entirely. In Jesus our whole being finds its rest. In him we are healed of everything.

How did people find out about this wonderful message of Jesus? Well, firstly they heard and saw Jesus. Then they heard and saw the followers of Jesus. And we are the recipients of that seeing and hearing today. If those around us are going to find out about the wonderful Good News of Jesus, they are only going to find out by seeing and hearing about Jesus, from us.

Conclusion

So, what might we take into our lives this week as we dwell on these gospel passages of Jesus in action today.

How did the people of his time realize who Jesus was?
It was by his words and actions. By what they saw in him.

How do people know we are Christians?
We know because of our faith, because of what we believe. We know that salvation is only available by faith and through grace.

Those around who aren't Christians may not know this. The only way they might know we are Christians is by what we do and what we say.
The only way they might see Jesus, is in us.

This week when your family, your neighbours, or your work colleagues see you? What will they see?

Will they see the healing power of Jesus in you?

Amen.