

February 4, 2018 In A Nutshell Mark 1:28-34

This morning I want to begin with the word after. After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, HE went into the wilderness. HE was tempted. The angels of God ministered to HIM and when HE emerged from that experience, HE began to minister in Judea. During that year, Herod imprisoned John the Baptist. After that occurred Jesus left Judea and went north to Galilee and Nazareth. He taught one morning in HIS hometown's synagogue. The reaction was so negative, Jesus life was threatened. Jesus called some men to be HIS disciples, and HE moved the center of his ministry to Capernaum. After that, Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum. The reviews on Jesus teaching, is that "HE taught them as one having authority."

Here is the significance of that phrase. It was the custom of the Scribes to do something in their teaching discipline that made their performance very like the deliverance of a paper by a professor in a University. When they made significant points, and they did they cited other rabbis, under whom they studied, or whose work that had read. Rabbi Herschel said,....." Their performance was academic. Not always a bad thing. We Presbyterian Christians insist that our leaders, ministers of the word be extremely well educated. The best example I can think of is to simply attest, that admission to a school like Knox College requires that the candidate already have a University Degree. However, the second thing we require is that the candidate have a rich personal faith, recognized by a local church Session, recommending the candidate to a Presbytery, whose membership must be satisfied that the local church's confidence in the candidate is warranted.

This is the Jesus connection. When Jesus taught he had a tendency to say, "You have heard it said....but I say to you....and HE would usually make HIS point based on a Biblical text, without citing the rabbis, as earthly authorities. Jesus continually left the impression that HE was in touch with God in a profound and personal way. God's Word came to life on His lips. And as those who tried to trap HIM with words, found out the hard way, that HE had a remarkable command of the Scriptures. People, the ordinary people were impressed.

The verses I read this morning describe a Sabbath morning in Capernaum. Jesus comes out of the synagogue, and walks to the house that Peter and Andrew call home. Pilgrims have been visiting that site for a long time. The ruins of the synagogue still stand. On its steps one can look to the left and see the waters of the Sea of Galilee. Straight ahead there are several acres of the ruins of homes. The home of Simon Peter's mother-in-law has been identified because it became a church in the unfolding history of Capernaum. The distance from the synagogue steps to the house of Simon Peter's mother-in-law is about the distance from our church steps to the other side of the creek. It is not a hike. It is a few minutes walk.

When Jesus, Simon Peter and Andrew get there and enter, Peter's mother-in-law is in bed. She has a fever and they explain to Jesus she is not well. It does not say they asked or expected Jesus to do something, and I am biased. I think if they had done so we would be told. Mark is related to Peter and I am sure he knows all there is to know about this episode. Jesus

goes to her. He takes her hand. He helps her up. And Mark tells us in blunt terms...two things: the fever left her. She was healed. And secondly she immediately takes over in the kitchen and begins to wait on Jesus and the boys. One of the things we understand in our time, is that fevers leave us weak, leave us tired, leave us needing rest and recovery time. Mark tells it in plain language...this elderly Jewish mother, needed none of that. She takes charge of the ministry of hospitality in her house. She is healed and energized by the Spirit of God in and through Jesus.

I am presuming something based on the words, "she began to wait on them." The choice of words indicates she served them, probably something to drink, and continued to serve them, probably preparing the evening meal. Or at least serving it, if it had been prepared ahead of the Sabbath. The point is, she did not serve them tea and then go back to bed. She went to work, and she wanted especially to serve Jesus for all that HE has done in touching her life with the precious grace of the living God. He has saved in her in more ways than one!

Were that the end of the story, we would say, so Jesus taught in the morning, went to the home of Peter and Andrew and healed Peter's mother-in-law. The fact is that is only the beginning. Word spreads like wild fire. Jesus healed a demonized man at the synagogue in the morning too. So...as the sun is going down, which signals the end of Sabbath and the beginning of Monday, a crowd is gathering outside Peter's mother-in-law's home. It is not a small crowd. Mark tells us, "the whole town" was at her door. People have brought their sick family members. They suffer from various diseases. And among those who are ill are a number of demonized individuals. The testimony of Mark, either because he was there, or through his relatives Peter and Andrew, is that Jesus healed them all. And we would be foolish, if we did not think that this spectacle, became in a matter of minutes an attraction in its own right. Do not make the mistake of thinking of the healing of the demonized as the healing of various forms of mental illness...even insanity.

The point of these details is that Jesus saves people in need of being saved. And a second point is that where God is gracious, Satan opposes and seeks to destroy. Randy Travis, the country singer recorded a song some years ago entitled "When Momma Prayed." It includes the lines.... "It almost made you feel sorry for the devil, You knew he never had a prayer...when Momma prayed." Whether it is disease, the result of broken bones, or the spread of germs, or for that matter demonic forces....the power of the Lord Jesus Christ was supreme power. Jesus healed many. Jesus drove out demons from a number of those who were there. He would not let the demons speak. Jesus had power over their ability to make sound.

This is my point for this day. In this episode in Capernaum we are reading about the beginning of Jesus ministry in Galilee. As I mentioned last week this ministry lasted approximately a year and nine months. And we see in Capernaum in a nutshell what Jesus did in Galilee over that period of time. He taught people about the kingdom of God, that HE is the messiah, that the times have changed and the promises of Scripture are being fulfilled. He teaches and crowds gather. Because HE is by all the evidence the King who was prophesied,

people brought their sick loved ones and friends to HIM. Because they believed HE was the King of Kings, they brought the demonized to HIM. And because these people had need of healing and freeing and God's saving grace...Jesus touched them, HE spoke the word, and HE gave them new life. In a nutshell, that is what the Galilee ministry was about. Jesus gives people new life, not because they deserve it...but because they are in need. The news spreads. If you have a need....go and see Jesus. In His presence, Miracles happen.

Let us pray;

Lord our God, we understand that we are never going to have everything we want. We also understand that some things we want are simply not good for us, even if we cannot see the reason why that would be. Lord we come to you recognizing YOU change things, YOU change lives, You give life and with YOU all things are possible. Meet our greatest need. Make us clean in YOUR sight. Heal us of the things that hurt us. Make us whole and able to see how much you love us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen