

May 9, 2021 A Mother's Day Story Mark 2:29-33

Dearly Beloved;

The showery wet weather continues. As the grass grows and needs cutting, as the flowers bloom, and we enjoy their beauty, as the trees blossom and then turn to producing leaves, we see that the normal cycles of Spring are indeed coming to pass. In another month we will be looking at the possibility of Summer weather. The creation is showing us all the signs that "normal patterns" are not gone from the earth. This week we saw our first trillium on the road side at the farmhouse. We have been seeing blood root, and Dutchman's breaches for the past 2 weeks. And the black flies are out in droves in the woods. Take heart that the creation is unfolding as it should. I heard one expert share that there are signs the 3rd Wave is beginning to crest and even diminish. We shall see about that. The point is there is hope in the air. And there is hope in the Gospel.

To all those who are sharing Mother's Day, and to all the Mothers among us, I wish you every blessing. I give thanks to God for your love and caring ways. To God be the glory! The lesson I have chosen this week is from Mark chapter 2:29-33.

To put this story in context one must go back to verse 14 of Mark 2, and then notice verse 21. What Mark tells us is that when John the Baptist, Jesus cousin, was put in prison by King Herod, Jesus went to Galilee. There HE ministered to the crowds who gathered to HIM for the balance of two, to two

and a half years. So once again we are looking at details of the Galilee ministry. In verse 21 we find that as we learned last week, Capernaum became Jesus home away from home, after his rejection in Nazareth. And yes, this is Mark's telling of Jesus attending, worship on the Sabbath at the synagogue in Capernaum.

Remember that Mark is a teenager, related to Peter. As this episode highlights, Simon Peter's relationship with Jesus is one of the strains of source material that Mark shares. In the synagogue at Capernaum the people are impressed and amazed at the authority of Jesus when HE teaches from the scriptures. That is compounded by the amazement when HE silences and sets people free who are believed to be possessed of demons. In verse 28 of chapter 2 we are told that Jesus reputation is made in Galilee because people are talking about these 3 things. Jesus teaches with authority, HE heals the sick, and HE releases those who are in bondage to the power of evil. These things lead to the crowds of people who seek HIM out to hear the teaching about the KINGDOM of God. They bring their sick to HIM in hopes of healing. They bring their demonized to HIM, in hopes of their deliverance.

We tend to talk about the miracles of Jesus as though they were some sort of magic act. There is a better way of describing what happened. For the most part, this audience is Jewish. They believe in a God who delivers and sets free. What they see in Jesus and HIS ministry is that whether HE is

teaching, healing, or setting people free they witness the power of God in HIM in a way they do not witness the power of God in their traditional worship leaders, and what we might call organized religion. If you think back to the Indiana Jones trilogy of movies directed by Spielberg and starring Harrison Ford, there is a scene with the FBI agents when they invite Indiana Jones to go in search of the lost Ark of the Covenant. He shows the FBI agents a picture of the Ark in an old King James Version pulpit Bible. The depiction shows lines radiating from the Ark. And they ask Jones what the lines are communicating. He hesitates and then says... "the power of God. Any of you guys ever go to Sunday School?" What occurred in Galilee, what people saw in Jesus ministry, was the power and the presence of the Holy God who judges sin, and delivers and saves HIS people from it. It is a revealing of the imminence of God by means of power encounters.

"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon (Peter) and Andrew." The they is Jesus, these disciples of HIS, and anyone who wanted more of whatever it was Jesus was teaching and doing. They are excited. They do not want to miss a single word, a single moment, a healing, a deliverance, whatever. They are hungry for the imminent presence of God as they discern it in Jesus.

The 2nd trip Barbara and I made to Israel, we visited the ruin of this synagogue and we walked to the home of Peter and Andrew. It was not a long walk. My estimate?

About the distance from the doors of St. Andrew's Stirling to the other side of Rawdon Creek. Maybe, the distance from the church to the traffic light, on Mill Street. A walk of 5 to 7 minutes. The house is the home of Peter's mother-in-law. And she is sick and in bed with a fever, in a world that does not have anything comparable to modern medicines. And they tell Jesus about her and the fact that she is ill. Fever's kill people. We have friends who came down with Covid-19. They spiked fevers of 107 degrees. Two weeks ago. We were afraid we were going to lose them.

“Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them.” For a number of days after our friends fever broke, all they wanted to do was lay down, and sleep. That is the normal shape of recovery. Peter's mother-in-law starts cooking and serving refreshments, immediately. As I said, no one who made the walk to Peter's home wanted to miss a thing. They expected that where Jesus was there would be a display of power, and the authority of the dynamic love of God that saves. It is about Peter's wife's mother. And everyone is talking about it, telling it in their own words. (I saw it! HE took her by the hand! The Fever left her! And she starts making sandwiches and serving wine!) It makes faith sensible, reasonable. It excites. There is enthusiasm.

And here is the result. “That evening after sunset (technically the next day in the darkest hours of the night), the people of Capernaum brought to Jesus all the sick and demon

possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons.” (vs. 33) So what happens is that Jesus winds up pulling an all nighter. One by one he deals with the sick and the demon ridden. (Did you see that? Did you see him? Did you see what Jesus did for her?)

The whole community of Capernaum is involved and if you don't think they were excited you're dreaming in technicolour. And if you go on to read the next bit, having been up most of the night, Jesus got up early to go off alone to pray. And then to everyone's surprise, Jesus decides it's time to move on and take this ministry of HIS to other parts and villages in the region of Galilee. And the experience of those who attended is that it was more of the same. Teaching. Healing. Delivering. Freeing.

And it is not just about the crowds that gather to see the greatest show on earth. It is about the revelation of who Jesus really is. The Son of God. The Messiah. The One concerning whom the prophets wrote and spoke. It is about the fact that God is. HE really is. It is about the fact that God really loves. Even in the midst of Covid-19 with all the tragic stories and terrible details, there have been moments of amazing, really amazing grace. The grace of God. Jesus had time and made time and took time to hold an old woman's hand and dismiss the fever that could have killed her. That is the love of God. It is a piece of what makes Peter and Andrew the men they became after the resurrection of Jesus. And it is the one

reason the Church of Jesus Christ exists. That God might be revealed in the midst of the way we interact and the way we do what we do. The things we treasure most. Like a mother's day story worth repeating...because it is about Jesus touching a sick woman and changing her life, and the lives of a whole lot of others who saw what happened and praised God.

Let us pray;

Lord continue to remind us YOU are really present, and that YOU really care. Grant us joy when we lack it. Grant us peace, because YOU make us to be at peace when we give our attention to YOU. Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts, to YOUR holy Spirit's presence. Amen