

**Epiphany 5: 2/4/18**  
**St. Paul: Luxemburg, WI**  
**Text: Mark 1:29-39**  
**Theme: Jesus the Preacher**

Just before this, Jesus had been preaching in the synagogue. Jesus had been telling people that He was the Savior who had been promised. He was telling them that He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. He was proclaiming the good news that He was the one who had come to make the payment for the sins of the world and overcome death itself. Jesus left church and went to a house nearby. We are told that it was the home of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. We are told that Peter's mother in law was in bed sick with a fever.

How many of you have had a fever this winter? Okay, if you are one of the fortunate ones not to have had a fever so far this winter, I would be willing to bet that you had one last winter. We know that statistically speaking, in our area, that there are very few people here who have been so blessed as to avoid having a fever last winter and this winter. If you are in that group, your days are numbered. Do you hear the person in the pew behind you coughing? Do you hear the sniffing in front of you? Those germs are coming for you. There's no way to avoid the reality of illness in this world is there? Why does it bother you when I say that? The truth is that everyone of us here can relate to that woman lying in bed sick with a fever.

You know what it's like to lay in bed with a fever wanting to die because it seems as if death would be preferable. You see that's the effect of living in a sinful fallen world, isn't it? You can't avoid sickness, can you?

What's different for this woman though, and perhaps why we pass this passage of Scripture by so quickly, is that I doubt that most of you really feared death the last time that you had a fever. We aren't too excited when we run a temperature, but we figure we can just run to the doctor and get some antibiotics and be all better within twenty four hours. The idea of dying from it doesn't cross our minds. It wasn't that way in Jesus' time. A fever was a serious business that could certainly end in death.

The other thing that you notice is that she was at home. Now, today, we might think that she was at home because her insurance wouldn't allow her to stay at the hospital. We might think that she couldn't afford her copay to go see the doctor, but that's not the case. We take for granted that when people are sick that they can go to world class medical facilities and get care that wasn't even dreamed of in Jesus' day. I suppose that's a good thing from a physical standpoint, but I wonder if it's such a good thing from a spiritual perspective. You see in other generations people weren't separated from sickness and death the way that we are today. Our society today doesn't have

to think much about the reality of sickness and death, does it? It has not always been that way. In other periods of time, when a person was sick, you knew it. You saw them, and you often times saw them die. It constantly impressed upon people the reality that they too would one day die. We live in strange times in that regard. We are shielded from the reality of death. That causes people to live as if it will never come to them.

I was looking at a report some time back that was talking about the fact that young people today come to church in much lower numbers than previous generations. They just don't see church as being something that they need. I think that part of that is certainly the fact that sickness and death aren't that real to them. They are to a great extent insulated from it. They are sheltered from the fact that their time in this world is not forever. Even parents at times will go to great lengths to shelter their children from the reality of death. Quite a few years back, I had a former Lutheran school teacher die. The family requested that the school children sing at the funeral. Word got out that this was going to take place, and I will never forget some of the calls that I received from parents. One wanted to know where the casket was going to be and if the children would be able to see it. Others simply refused to allow their children to be present at such an occasion.

Well, we see in our text that these people did not try to hide from sickness and death. They understand that pretending that sickness and death aren't real doesn't work. We also see that Jesus certainly isn't afraid of it. This is after all why Jesus came: to overcome death. Jesus walks up to this woman, takes her by the hand, and lifts her out of bed. He doesn't tell her to take two aspirin and call him in the morning. He doesn't give her an expensive prescription to fill or anything else. He simply takes her by the hand and lifts her out of bed. What happens next? We are told that she gets up and begins to serve them. She gets up, puts on a pot of coffee, gets the plate of donuts out on the table, and starts taking lunch requests...or something like that.

What's the point? This is what happens when a person is healed by Jesus, whether that healing is physical or spiritual. When you are made well by Jesus, you have a desire to serve. This woman was made well by Jesus. She didn't just sit around and wonder what else Jesus was going to do for her. She has a desire to serve Jesus. Have you been healed by Jesus? Perhaps you have been physically healed by Him. We know that Jesus does certainly give us physical healing many times here in this world. But you have certainly been spiritually healed by Jesus. Jesus comes to you and gives you the forgiveness of sins. He makes you spiritually whole. He gives you the assurance of

heaven itself. It is that healing that you have received that gives you the same desire that Simon's mother in law had. You get up and serve. You have a desire to serve in whatever way you have been given opportunity to do so. Why would the church ever be short of people willing to serve? Why would we ever have too few people to teach Sunday school, sing in the choir, fill church offices, or do anything that needs to be done? Everyone here has been healed by Jesus. He has forgiven your sins and made you whole. You have a desire to serve Him.

We see that word gets out about this miracle. We are told that evening at sundown people lined up at the door of the house. Sundown was the soonest that people could come. That was when the Sabbath ended. What a scene! They were lining up the wheelchairs and stretchers. There were people who were demon possessed, probably frothing at the mouth and making all kinds of strange noises, all lined up at the door. There would have been people coughing and hacking. Every sick person for miles was waiting outside the door. It would have been scarier than when you have to sit in the waiting room at the doctor's office wondering if you aren't going to catch something far worse from the people around you than what you came in with. We see that Jesus walks down the line of sick people, touches people left and right, and heals one after another.

The people love this. The disciples love this. Jesus is at the height of His popularity here. But then...something strange happens. Jesus gets up the next morning before everyone else. Jesus gets up while it's still dark and goes out where He can be alone. What does He do? We are told that He prays. We see how Jesus starts His day. How do you start your day? Do you start your day with prayer and time alone with God listening to His voice through His Word? Why does Jesus do this? Well, we see that Jesus needs to refocus on why He has come. We see that Jesus recognizes the temptation that the disciples have missed. What is the temptation? Well, we will see that in Jesus' answer to Simon. Simon comes looking for Jesus and finds Him. He tells Jesus that everyone is looking for Him. You see what Simon Peter is telling Jesus is that the people want another show. They want to see more healings. Jesus is giving the people what they want, and the people want more of it. The disciples clearly want more of it as well.

Jesus gives Peter a very strange response, and not a response that Peter wants. Jesus tells Peter that it's time to pack up and leave. He tells Peter that they are going to go to the next towns. Why? Jesus says that they are going to go to the next towns so that He can preach there. He says that this is why He came. You see the temptation that Jesus was confronting there in the desolate place was the temptation to

avoid the cross. The miracles that Jesus was performing were simply a demonstration of who He was. They were not the primary purpose for which He came. Jesus had come so that He might go to the cross and suffer and die for your sins and overcome death for you. Jesus came to preach. Jesus recognizes that the people are in danger of being distracted from why He came. Jesus had come to preach to the people. He had come to proclaim to them the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of heaven, but they were in danger of being distracted from that.

What about you? Jesus wants to preach to you. Do you find that exciting? Do you want to hear Him preach or would you rather have Him do whatever miracle you are looking for? I read an article recently titled "Congregations Gone Wild." The article was talking about a series of studies that show that many pastors in America are suffering from burnout. The reason for it though wasn't just a lack of vacation or rest and overwork. The major reason was in congregational attitudes toward preaching. The study pointed out that congregations increasingly want pastors to soothe and entertain them. The study pointed to theater style seating and giant projection screens in churches as a couple of examples. One congregation told the pastor that they wanted sermons that were no longer than ten minutes in length and filled with funny stories that would leave people feeling great about themselves. The study

pointed out that many congregations do not want preaching that makes them feel uneasy, ask them to do the hard work of reconciliation, and challenges them to do other things that they may not want to do. The article concluded by saying, "Clergy need parishioners who understand that the church exists, as it always has, to save souls." The church exists to elevate people's values and desires.

Why is that? You see too often we become like the disciples in our text. We get distracted from what is of the greatest importance. Too often, we fail to see the importance of what Jesus wants to tell us. I remember years ago reading an article in the Lutheran Witness. The article was actually an interview of a chaplain who was called to a shooting scene. He talked about how people were gathered together in the one area waiting for news about their loved ones. He talked about one chaplain trying to talk to people and offer them comfort from God's Word and to pray with them. He talked about how this chaplain received a belligerent response. The people were clear that they didn't want that. They wanted to see their loved one delivered. They didn't want anything that the chaplain was offering to them through Word and prayer. You see so often we fail to see the importance and power of Jesus' preaching to us. We fail to understand that this is why Jesus came.

Jesus wants to preach to you. He comes to you again here today and preaches to you. Are you excited to have Jesus preach to you? What does Jesus want to preach to you? He wants to take your sins away. He wants to give you the assurance of God's love for you. He wants to give you the assurance of His presence with you and the promise of heaven. This is why Jesus has come, and that's why He continues to come to you today. We want to hear Jesus preach to us. Amen!!!