



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 04, 2024**

Theme: "Everyone is looking for you."

Gathering Prayer

All: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:29-39

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. ³¹So he went to her took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³²That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. ³⁵Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" ³⁸Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Gospel Focus

Mark's depiction of Jesus is often noted for its frenetic pace, and that whirlwind is on full display in this passage. Jesus meets need after need, and he responds time and time again. He heals those with whom he has a connection, like Simon's mother-in-law, and he heals those who come to him as strangers. All who encounter him leave, changed by the encounter. But at the speed he is working it's hard to see how he'd have time to interact personally, to see each person wholly as they are. Even at his frenetic pace, Jesus also prioritizes prayer—he rises early, before the crowds can catch him, and he finds a deserted place. There is perhaps a bit of tension here between his mission—"for this purpose have I come"—and his very human need to be alone, to regroup. To spend time with God.

Gospel Reflection

What often makes the difference between experiencing life as an endless drudgery and utter misery, and being alive with energy and joy is our state of health, be it physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Illness and other profound losses color the whole of our perception. When an illness persists, whether one's own or that of a loved one, one can empathize with Job's feeling of utter weariness. One longs for relief, and there is sometimes no hope of happiness ever again.

From such a pace of pain, we believers, like Job, pour out our hearts to God. Whether or not the healing we desire comes in the form we want, God is always with us, binding up our wounds and mending our broken hearts (Ps147:3). In the gospels, it is Jesus who embodies this power to repair shattered minds, bodies, and spirits. Regardless of what stands in the way of our being able to receive and share the good news, Jesus binds up or casts out, thus releasing the power within us to experience and pass on God's love.

That is what happens with Simon's mother-in-law. Ablaze with fever, she lacks her usual energy for service to others. In much the same way that Jesus calls her son-in-law to be a disciple. Jesus approaches her and frees her from all that impedes her from responding to the good news. Just as Simon Peter leaves behind his net so he can "fish for people" (see Mark 1:17), so his mother-in-law, holding on to Jesus' hand as the fever leaves her, takes up her own ministry.

The verb *diekonoun*, usually translated as "served" or "waited on" (Mark 1:31), not only refers to serving dinner but also to a wide range of ministries, including ministries of the word and of the table (Acts 6:1-6), and service that is apostolic (Acts 1:25), financial (Luke 8:3), and administrative (Rom16:1). Although this scripture passage doesn't say what kind of service she engaged in, the early believers remembered how she ministered to and with them.

When Jesus heals people, he does not simply restore them to a former state of well-being. Rather, physical healings are outer signs of deeper transformation of body, mind, and spirit. As many people who have had a near-death experience attest, nothing is ever the same afterwards. Similarly, Simon's mother-in-law experiences a "resurrection." The verb *egeiro*, "lifted up" (Mark 1:31), is the same word used for Jesus resurrection. A new life has been given her, but not for her only. As with all disciples, it is a transformed life that is to be shared in service.

Jesus' purpose includes not only healing but also preaching (Mark 1:38-39). He frees people from whatever binds them so that they can join him in proclaiming the power of God's love. Paul says that there is not really any choice in the matter. When one has experienced God's gracious healing love, one is obliged to tell it forth. In whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we are called to share God's love according to our own gifts and calling.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Job 7:1-4, 6-7

¹ "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man?
² Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, ³ so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. ⁴ When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. ⁶ "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. ⁷ Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.

Responsorial Psalm — Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

R: Praise the Lord, who heals the brokenhearted.

Praise the Lord, for he is good; sing praise to our God, for he is gracious; it is fitting to praise him. The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem; the dispersed of Israel he gathers. **(R)**

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.
He tells the number of the stars; he calls each by name. **(R)**

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; to his wisdom there is no limit.
The Lord sustains the lowly; the wicked he casts to the ground." **(R)**

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

¹⁶Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. ¹⁹Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

²²To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. ²³I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

2602. Jesus often draws apart to pray *in solitude*, on a mountain, preferably at night.(Cf. Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16) He *includes all men* in his prayer, for he has taken on humanity in his incarnation, and he offers them to the Father when he offers himself. Jesus, the Word who has become flesh, shares by his human prayer in all that "his brethren" experience; he sympathizes with their weaknesses in order to free them.(Cf. Heb 2:12, 15; 4:15) It was for this that the Father sent him. His words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret.

Sharing and Discussion

1. What, if any, prevents you from boldly proclaiming the good news? Are you concern about how people might perceive you, if you do so?
2. How does your work-at your job, at home, or in your community-bring glory to God?
3. What elements of your day to day life seem like mere chores, mindless toiling? How can you infuse something holy into them and find sacred purpose?

Closing Prayer

All: Favor us, compassionate God, with your care so that we might grow in the awareness of your hopes for the Body of Christ. We ask this through Jesus, our healing Lord who lives and reign with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom.

Every Wednesday

Time: 8 – 9.30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwdTY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>

Meeting ID: 276 007 3734

Passcode: 1WordOfGod

All are welcome!

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References:

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