

Sermon Mark 1 29 39 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday a Epiphany

Sermon: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Mark 1:29-39

Theme: A successful ministry – that endures forever

Goal: Jesus' ministry is to preach the coming of God's Kingdom – not just to heal.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: It was a typical Sabbath Day for Jesus: He went with His disciples to the church in the morning; after this they went to Peter's house for lunch; they probably rested for a while in the afternoon or just had a chat; and when the Sabbath was over, after sunset (according to the Jewish rules), people came to see Jesus and to be healed by Him. And a new week was to begin. - This report is the continuity of the Gospel of last Sunday.

The disciples were excited after that weekend! “Everyone is looking for you!” - Peter reported to Jesus. 'Come down from the mountain! Heal more people! You are well accepted! Your ministry is successful!' - Gloria, Alleluia!

*But Jesus thought otherwise. Wanting many more to hear Him and receive the blessings of the Good News, Jesus opted to go somewhere else, as He said: ...so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” The lesson here is that beyond the horizon of the present ministry there often lies much more that God wants to accomplish through His obedient servants.” (ABC 1175).*

I – Not just physical healing

People look for Jesus for different reasons. Those in Capernaum were amazed by His power of healing. “People brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door.” Others

look for Him as a *wonder-worker, social leader, healer, teacher, hero... a revolutionary... or a fanatic apocalyptic figure* (Series B, 62). Many so called “Christian churches” present Christ and gather a lot of people, but it is a Christ according to their own purpose and goals, and not according to Jesus' purpose.

There is no doubt that we can hope in Jesus for our physical needs as well. We daily entrust our life, our family and our job to His gracious hands. We pray for those who are sick, hoping that He can help and heal them according to His will. I repeat: According to His will! We cannot force God to heal someone or to give us something.

And when He heals us or gives us a special blessing, let us serve Him with gladness, as Peter's mother-in-law served Him after she had been healed from her fever that very Sabbath. We have many reasons to thank God and to serve Him, and we acknowledge that whatever we are and whatever we have is a blessing of God. Without His protection we wouldn't be alive. Therefore we serve Him with what we have.

But to heal and to give material blessings is not the main goal of Jesus' ministry. He is very clear in the answer He gave to Peter:

II – To preach and to pray

“ Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come,” said Jesus And the content of His preaching is recorded in v. 15: “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.”

In spite of healing and helping so many people, Jesus was rejected by the same people and put to death. People were looking for Jesus as a political leader and for physical help, but didn't accept His message of repentance. They didn't want to turn from their wrong ways. Especially the church of that time looked at Jesus as an adversary and didn't accept Him as the One sent by God. - But God turned Jesus' death to a

blessing for all of us: His death was the payment for our sins and guarantees forgiveness for us. We don't need to pay for our sins anymore; the payment was done on the cross. When we accept Jesus' sacrifice and believe in Him, we have forgiveness of our sins and life – the life that He assures us by His resurrection! Eternal life!

This is the Good News Jesus was preaching. God is willing to accept everyone who comes repented and who believes in Jesus. This gives a much wider blessing than just a healing. Healing is just a moment and endures for the life time. But it ends when we die. - Material blessings are good and we can enjoy them for ourselves, for our family, and share them with the needy. We use them to build up God's earthly kingdom among us: the church as a building and the church as a community of believers. But material blessings will be left for others. We cannot take them with us when we depart. - But the Good News of God's love in Jesus endures forever. The faith that the Good News brings goes with us to heaven. Therefore Jesus couldn't stay restricted to one city – Capernaum in this case – but He had to go “somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come”, He said.

And by the preaching of the Good News by Jesus, by the apostles and by the Church, Jesus built up and is still building up His Kingdom. After His resurrection, He didn't send His disciples to heal, but to preach and to baptize, making new disciples (Matthew 28). Healing and other wonders would follow the preaching of the Word, confirming the power of the Gospel (Mark 16) in the first Century, as we read in the Book of Acts; and can happen nowadays; but not as a condition, but according to God's will. He is still powerful.

An important detail of our text cannot be missed. V.35 says: “Very early in the morning, (after the busy Sabbath), while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.” Sometimes I think that Jesus, as the Son of God, didn't need to pray. He is One with the Father, and the Father knew everything

about Him, His challenges and needs. But we have several records in the Gospels reporting that Jesus prayed, and He prayed a lot! As a Biblical Scholar wrote: *Before the hustle and bustle of the day began, Jesus took time to commune with the Father. Our Lord set a clear example for us, namely that the day's business must never be more urgent than the time spent in communion with God.* (ABC 1175). Luther said once: I have lots of thing to do today. I must spend more time in prayer!

This shows us how important it was for Jesus and how important it is for us to be in communion with our God through prayer. We cannot ignore or despise private prayers at home or in a quiet place, and fellowship prayer with the family, in the church and at the Bible Study. The preaching of God's Good News and prayer run together. In the Gospel, God talks with us and gives us His blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation. In prayer, we talk with God, giving thanks and bringing Him our needs and hopes. This establishes a deep communion between the Father and His children.

Conclusion: The faith that saves doesn't believe in God only as the One who gives relief in our distresses and who gives us the daily bread according to our personal wishes. The faith that saves believes in God as the Father of our Savior Jesus Christ, One God with the Holy Spirit, who loves us and accepts us as His children, forgiving our sins and making us members of His Kingdom. That faith Jesus was proclaiming personally from place to place, and sent His disciples to share it with the entire world after His resurrection and ascension. Jesus is still active, going from place to place preaching the Good News through His church, His ministers and through each of us as we give testimony about our faith. Jesus doesn't want to stay at St. Thomas only, but He wants to go to other places as well. Blessed is the one who has the right faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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