

Sermon Bytes: Raised Up

Mark 1:29 - 39

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Whether we believe in God as a long haired judge in the clouds or God as another word for the great life energy that hovered over the deep and sparked creation who is also known as the great "I AM", we all can be grateful for life and life that is generally good. May this message speak to our search for meaning and show us some truth about the meaning of life that we can use as we study Jesus's ministry as we heard in the scripture of Mark.

The gospel of Mark is written by someone who was excited about Jesus and what he did! He was in a hurry to tell the story of Jesus and what he was like and how he lived as The Son of Man. It is probably the first book about Jesus' life and ministry and Mark's stories are used and added to in the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

We heard last week that Jesus had called some fishermen to join him- Simon and his brother Andrew, and then James and John. Jesus called them- Come with me! And I will make you fishers of men and women! And they left their nets and followed Jesus. They were excited to go and fish for people!

Interesting - they left their nets the day Jesus called them, James and John left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men... but they did go home. We see that from our reading this week.

This week Jesus was traveling with his disciples after church one Sabbath day. This took place before Simon had his name changed to Peter, meaning the Rock, probably soon after being called to fish for people.

Simon and his brother Andrew, James and John are invited to Simon's house for dinner. And Jesus is the special guest. Simon's mother-in-law was on for meal prep but the rest of the family told Simon- sorry but your mother- in-law is sick. She has a fever and is sick in bed!

They told Jesus and he went at once to her bedside. He took her by the hand and helped her up. Here is Jesus with his hands of kindness! Just as Jesus taught with authority about God's way of justice and kindness, so also he showed God's compassion and caring for those who are ill or down and out, depressed or ill.

The fever left her, as Jesus let go of her hand and she immediately began to serve them, to minister to their needs, to care for them and to get dinner! This woman had a quick response to Jesus's healing; just like her son-in-law Simon when he quickly left his nets to follow Jesus.

Later, that evening, the word had spread that Jesus had healed Simon's mother-in-law and the gospel of Mark says the whole city was lined up at Simon's door to see Jesus. Those who were sick physically or mentally were gathered in the front yard. And Jesus cured many! Notice – many were healed, not necessarily everyone- but many who were sick with various diseases and physical and mental ailments. It took all evening...

Very early next morning, it was still dark, when Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place and prayed. This morning we sang a quiet hymn at the beginning – Come and find the quiet Centre, this is a place where we can be grounded for the busy day, for the busy week ahead. It is a place where we each can listen for a prodding from God for a direction ... or

where we can be open to newness of spirit to carry on through the winter. We are half way through!

Simon must have wakened up and missed Jesus. He and Andrew and friends figured Jesus went somewhere quiet – they must have seen Jesus do it before...Jesus is often mentioned going up to a hill or outside to pray. Outside is also a place I like to pray- beside the lake or under a big tree are some of my favorite places to pray. I often step into the sanctuary when I'm in this building and find it is a place of peace.

When they found Jesus they told him that everyone was looking for him. But instead of going back Jesus wanted to move on- Let us go to the neighbouring towns so I can proclaim the message there. And he went throughout Galilee proclaiming the message of God's way and healing others as they went.

The United Church has a song that describes our faith and understanding of Jesus in present day language. It says:

Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—
 a commonwealth not of domination
 but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.
 He healed the sick and fed the hungry.
 He forgave sins and freed those held captive
 by all manner of demonic powers.
 He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.
 He preached and practised unconditional love—
 love of God, love of neighbour, love of friend, love of enemy—
 and he commanded his followers to love one another
 as he had loved them.

And we can take the same attitude as Jesus- Use our hands for teaching and healing wherever we go- don't be afraid to go to a new place, to take the good news of God's love with us on whatever adventure we find waiting for us...Here at Crossroads each Sunday is special as we travel on our pilgrimage of faith. We have transfiguration (Jesus the Light) end of Epiphany next week, then the beginning of the time before Easter called Lent, with Communion... we have Olympic games to share and provide us with healing laughter and a chance to bring a friend with us to church. Keep praying for ways to be the hands of Jesus as you go forward in new directions.

May it be that our coming here together renews our strength and raises us up to live our lives as signs of God's compassion and healing to the world in which we live. May it be that we go from here with hands ready to serve and care for and minister to those around us following the pattern of Jesus' hands.

Let us reflect on our part in the body of Christ