

## JESUS HEALS WITH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

Sermon for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany, 2018

Mark 1:29-39

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, Mark 1:29-39: <sup>29</sup> **Immediately after they left the synagogue, they went into the home of Simon and Andrew, together with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Simon’s mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. <sup>31</sup> He went to her, took her hand, and lifted her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them.**

<sup>32</sup> **In the evening, when the sun had set, people kept bringing to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole city had gathered at the door. <sup>34</sup> Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases, and drove out many demons, but He would not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.**

<sup>35</sup> **Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a lonely place, and there He prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and those who were with him searched for Him. <sup>37</sup> When they found Him, they told Him, “Everyone is looking for You.”**

<sup>38</sup> **He told them, “Let us go somewhere else, to the small towns that are near, so that I may preach there also! For I have come forth for this purpose.”**

<sup>39</sup> **He went and preached in their synagogues everywhere in Galilee and drove out the demons.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It had been a long day for Jesus. From last Sunday’s Gospel,<sup>1</sup> we heard of Jesus going into the synagogue where He began to teach. As He began teaching on the reading of the day, a man with an unclean spirit interrupted Him. Jesus spoke sharply to the man, and with the authority of His Word drove the unclean spirit from him.

Now, as was the custom of that time and place, one of the members invited the teacher to a meal in his home. That is how Jesus came to be in the home of Simon.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:21-28

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This is the same Simon whom Jesus had already called to be a disciple. Later on, Jesus would give Simon the name Peter. When they arrived at the house, they found Simon's mother-in-law **lying down with a fever**. The disciples **told Jesus about her at once**. Was He willing to help them too, or were His miracles meant only to increase His prestige and renown with the multitudes? They immediately experienced that those close to Jesus were also to be recipients of His loving care. Jesus answered their request: <sup>31</sup> **He went to her, took her hand, and lifted her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them.** The healing was complete and instantaneous. The woman's strength was fully restored. She immediately proceeded to wait on them - her way of expressing her gratitude. Simon never forgot; Mark must have heard it from his lips frequently.

Capernaum was not a very big town, and so word of these events got out rather quickly. Jesus had driven an unclean spirit out of a man in the synagogue and then had gone to Simon's house and healed his mother-in-law. News like that travels fast. It is no wonder then that <sup>32</sup> **in the evening, when the sun had set, people kept bringing to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.** <sup>33</sup> **The whole city had gathered at the door.** Now that it was evening, the Sabbath had now passed, and the work of bringing all these sick and demon-possessed sufferers to Jesus could be performed without violating the law of Sabbath rest.

Jesus did not hesitate in providing relief for those who came. He **healed many who were sick with various diseases, and drove out many demons**. Given that the healing did not start until evening, and that **the whole city**, simply another way of saying a large number of people, were brought to Jesus, it is reasonable to assume that the ministry to these people lasted late into the night, and Jesus, being true God but also true man, must have been exhausted after such a long day.

Yet, when the next day came, they could not find Jesus. Jesus was gone. Mark tells us where Jesus went. <sup>35</sup> **Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a lonely place, and there He prayed.** Instead of making Himself available to all the people who needed Him, He was off having quiet time in prayer.

Whenever a Gospel account tells us that Jesus went off and prayed by Himself like this, we should stop and think. You see, the Gospel accounts often tell us that Jesus went off to pray like this when He was under severe temptation. A good example of this is the Garden of Gethsemane where the Gospel writers recorded the actual words of Jesus' prayer: "*Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me! Nevertheless, not what I want, but what You want!*" (Mark 14:36). Jesus

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pleaded with His Father as a child would, that if possible this cup would be taken away from Him. His whole nature recoiled; the ordeal was an unspeakable one. The cup - He had mentioned it once before (10:38) - was the cup of God's wrath. Although He was ready to drink the cup, nevertheless He asked the Father if perhaps in His omniscience He knew of another way to save mankind. This was a time of temptation to abandon His mission by avoiding the cross. Although Jesus was ready to submit to whatever the Father decided, He dreaded what faced Him, and the temptation was to walk away from it all.

Another example of this is after the feeding of the five thousand. Mark says that *After Jesus had taken leave of them, He went away into the mountain to pray,* (Mark 6:46). Jesus prayed because the five thousand wanted to make Him king so that He could feed them free food every day. There was the temptation. He could have been their king, could have remained popular, and had lots of followers.

The temptation in today's Gospel was for Jesus to continue His healing ministry in Capernaum indefinitely. There were great crowds flocking to Him. He was popular. He had the power to recreate a small version of the Garden of Eden right there in Capernaum. Simon would have been happy to convert his home into a medical clinic and Jesus could have lived out a long and happy life healing people in Capernaum. There didn't have to be any torture or crucifixion. Jesus could have set up shop as the popular healing rabbi of Capernaum.

But that is not what Jesus had come into this world to do. He did not leave His throne above and take up human flesh in order to be popular, or famous, or wealthy, or powerful or anything like that. No, Jesus entered this world to overcome sin, death, and the power of the devil, to open heaven's gates to us, to carry out His Father's will, to bring eternal life to all people.

So Jesus **went away to a lonely place, and there He prayed.** That is where He confronted His most severe temptations, away from the crowds, but not alone, for He prayed to God the Father in heaven.

Jesus never gave in to temptation. He remained faithful to His mission. The Apostle Paul says that Jesus *humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross,* (Philippians 2:8). Jesus carried the entire burden of the world's sin to a hill just outside Jerusalem. There He allowed man to crucify Him. That someone dies on a cross is not an altogether unknown experience among human beings, but Jesus' death on the cross went beyond ordinary human experience, because it was no ordinary death. Death on a cross was a shameful death, the most shameful death a man could experience at that time. It was a form of death reserved for only the

vilest criminals and slaves. It was an excruciatingly painful death. Even more significantly, it was a kind of death cursed by God. Yet there He was. There Jesus hung with all our sin, our burdens, our hurts bearing down on Him. It is a place of punishment. It is our punishment that He endures. It is a place of agony and suffering. It is a place of death. It is a place where even God the Father in heaven abandons Him. Because Jesus never gave in to temptation, He could cry out in triumph just before He died and say, *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30).

Yet this was not the end for our faithful Saviour. The grave could not hold Him, for out of a desolate tomb, a grave, a place of death, Jesus rose from the dead. Not even death could hold Him. He had defeated Satan and death on the cross. Now He lives forever more celebrating the successful completion of His mission.

When Jesus went missing, <sup>36</sup> **Simon and those who were with him searched for Him.** <sup>37</sup> **When they found Him, they told Him, “Everyone is looking for You.”** They wanted Jesus to come back and continue healing people. Undoubtedly, they thought Jesus would be pleased with that. But Jesus knew many only came to Him for what there was in it for them. He also recognised the disciples still had a lot to learn about Him and His mission. Had Jesus followed their suggestion, He would not have placed the emphasis on proclaiming the gospel but on presenting Himself as a healer - the error many faith healers are guilty of today.

Jesus had other ideas. <sup>38</sup> **He told them, “Let us go somewhere else, to the small towns that are near, so that I may preach there also! For I have come forth for this purpose.”**

When the time was right, Jesus would go to Jerusalem in order to give Himself up as a sacrifice on the cross. Until that time, the main purpose of His ministry was preaching. The healing and other miracles were a sign of His authority, but they were not the main mission. The healing and other miracles were there to serve the main mission of preaching.

As marvellous as it was that Jesus went about healing people, it is His preaching that delivers the Kingdom of God to them. Jesus could go about giving away free food, healing the sick, and even raising the dead, but none of this would bring the Kingdom of God to one soul. Instead the Holy Spirit has promised to work through the Word of God - through preaching. It is as the Holy Spirit said through the Apostle Paul: *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ,* (Romans 10:17).

Today’s reading from the Gospel ends with these words: <sup>39</sup> **He went and preached in their synagogues everywhere in Galilee and drove out the demons.**

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Wherever Jesus went on this tour, He entered the synagogues. This offered Him many opportunities to preach the gospel, since synagogue services were not only conducted on the Sabbath but also on Mondays and Thursdays. In connection with His preaching, He also drove out demons, for they were the opponents of His message. The tour may well have lasted several weeks or even months, but Mark summarises it in one verse. The Saviour's emphasis was always on preaching the gospel. With His preaching He was bringing forgiveness, life, and salvation to those places.

Today, Jesus still gives forgiveness, life, and salvation through preaching. Even though Jesus has long ago ascended into heaven, His preaching continues. Before He ascended into heaven He appeared before His disciples and said to them, "*The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; <sup>47</sup> and on the basis of His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,*" (Luke 24:46-47).

Our Lord Jesus continues to bless us with good health just as He did in Capernaum. Yes, we get sick and old and frail, but today He gives us medical facilities to alleviate our pain and suffering when we are feeling under the weather. He even gives us wealth and luxury that even kings could not imagine in ancient days. Jesus is our shield and protection as we live day-by-day. He has answered our prayers, and we need to thank Him for these blessings.

But what a sad thing it would be if we stopped there! We have two thousand years of Church history and teachings to help us see what Jesus came to do. We have the Bible to read and study as over and over again it points us to the cross and Jesus' resurrection. Our worship services lead us to repent of our sins and confess our faith in Him.

Jesus still gives the forgiveness that leads to eternal life. He has opened heaven's gates. We already have eternal life even if we only see it dimly.<sup>2</sup> We have this all because Jesus did not give in to temptation, but remained faithful to His mission, His mission to the cross to take away all our sins. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Father in heaven, we who are Your children by grace pray that Your kingdom may come. We thank and praise You that You have revealed Jesus as Lord and Christ, and as King for evermore. We pray that His rule may be established from sea to sea and

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12

from the rising to the setting of the sun, that every nation, people, and tribe may confess that He is Lord, to Your glory. We thank You that, though He is King of kings, He humbled Himself and became our servant, so that He might be our Saviour, able to save all who come to You through Him.

Gracious Father, You do not enjoy seeing sinners die, but would rather see them turn from their sinning and live. Therefore spread the Gospel, and extend Your kingdom among all nations on earth. Cause the mighty to bow before Jesus their Lord, and teach all people to know that there is healing and saving power only in Him.

Although we rejoice that Your kingdom is already with us, make it come with fresh power and new blessing into our lives. Make the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, and move us to thankfulness and praise. Give us increased trust in Your Word and obedience to Your commandments. Give us grace to be humble, merciful, kind, and forgiving. Make Christ's message in all its richness live in our hearts and direct all we do and say. Grant that we, redeemed in body and spirit, may be dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Lead us to rejoice in Your grace, and to give thanks for Your mercy day by day.

We pray for Your Church on earth. Keep it from weakness and error, from unfaithful shepherds and false teachers. Protect us from heresy and division. Defend us from the lies of Satan and from the schemes of godless men. Make Your Church secure against the powers of hell. Teach Your people to be patient in hope, firm in trust, and faithful in prayer, until that day comes when You send Your angels to gather Your own into Your everlasting kingdom.

Comfort those who are cast down. Give patience to the sick, peace to the anxious, strength to the weak, help to the needy, and forgiveness to the repentant.

Pour out Your mercy on us all, and teach us to set our hearts on things above, where Christ our Lord lives and reigns. In His holy and precious name we pray. Amen.

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Isaiah 40:21-31

<sup>21</sup> Do you not know? Do you not hear?  
Have you not been told from the  
beginning? Have you not understood  
the foundations of the earth? <sup>22</sup> He is

the One who is enthroned above the  
circle of the earth, and those who live  
on it are like grasshoppers. He  
stretches out the heavens like a veil  
and spreads them out like a tent to live  
in. <sup>23</sup> He reduces princes to nothing.  
He has made the rulers of the earth

worthless.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, they have hardly been planted, they have hardly been sown, and their stem has hardly taken root in the ground, when He has blown on them, they have dried out, and a windstorm carries them away like stubble.

<sup>25</sup> “To whom will you compare Me, that I should be equal to him?” asks the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see! Who has created these? He brings out their army by number. He calls them all by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.<sup>27</sup> Jacob, why do you say, and Israel, why do you complain, “My way has been hidden from the LORD, and my just claim is disregarded by my God?”<sup>28</sup> Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not become tired or weary. His understanding is unsearchable.<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the weary, and He increases the strength of those who have no vigour.<sup>30</sup> Even young people will become tired and weary, and young men will indeed stumble;<sup>31</sup> but those who wait on the LORD will receive new strength. They will cause their feathers to grow like eagles. They will run and not become weary. They will walk and not grow tired.

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

<sup>16</sup> If I tell the Good News, I have nothing to boast about, because I am compelled to preach it. How terrible for me if I do not tell the Good News!

<sup>17</sup> For, if I do it because I want to do it, I receive a reward. However, if I do not want to do it, I still have this work entrusted to me.

<sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: That when I tell the Good News, I shall not let the Good News cost anyone anything, so that I may not take advantage of my authority in the Good News.

<sup>19</sup> For, although I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, in order that I may win more.<sup>20</sup> To the Jews I have become like a Jew, that I may win Jews. To those who are under the Law I have become like one under the Law, although I myself am not under the Law, that I may win those who are under the Law.<sup>21</sup> To those who are without the Law I have become like one who is without Law, although I am not without God’s Law, but am under Christ’s law — , that I may win those who are without the Law.<sup>22</sup> To weak persons I have become a weak person, that I may win those who are weak. I have become all things to all people, that in every way I may save some.<sup>23</sup> I am doing everything because of the Good News, that I may become a participant in it.<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one wins the

prize? Run in such a way that may win! <sup>25</sup> Everyone who enters an athletic contest goes into strict training. Now, they do it to win a wreath that withers, but we do it to win one that never withers. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I am not like one who runs aimlessly. I do not box like one who beats the air. <sup>27</sup> Rather, I treat my body roughly, and make it my slave, so that, after I have been a herald to others, I myself may not be disqualified.

Mark 1:29-39

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