

**5th Sunday after the Epiphany**

Mark 1:29–39

**LSB Hymns: 820, 398, 846,731, 619, 923.**

**Introit: Psalm 147:1-11.**

P Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God.

**C For it is pleasant. A song of praise is delightful.**

P The LORD is the Builder of Jerusalem.

**C He gathers the outcasts of Israel.**

P He is the Healer of broken-hearted people.

**C He binds up their sores.**

P He counts out the number of stars.

**C He gives all of them their names.**

P Great is our Lord and great in might!

**C There is no limit to His understanding.**

P The LORD helps afflicted people.

**C He brings wicked people down to the ground.**

P Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving!

**C Make melody to our God with the lyre!**

P He covers the heavens with clouds. He prepares rain for the ground.

**C He makes the grass grow on the mountains.**

P He gives food to the animals,

**C and to the young ravens that call out.**

P He does not delight in the strength of the horse.

**C He takes no pleasure in the thighs of a man.**

**All: The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.**

**Collect:** O Lord, keep Your family the Church continually in the true faith that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly Grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 40:21-31.**

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:16-27.**

**Gospel: 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.

The text for the sermon this morning is written in the book of St Mark 1:29-39 which was our Gospel reading before.

**29 Immediately after they left the synagogue, they went into the home of Simon and Andrew, together with James and John. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. 31 He went to her, took her hand, and lifted her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them.**

**32 In the evening, when the sun had set, people kept bringing to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 The whole city had gathered at the door. 34 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.**

**35 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. 36 Simon and those who were with him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they told Him, "Everyone is looking for You."**

**38 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."**

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

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with you.

Today's Gospel picks up in the middle of what has already been a long day for Jesus. The verses leading up to today's Gospel tell us that Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. He began teaching on the reading of the day when a demon possessed man interrupted Him. Jesus then drove the demon from the man with the authority of His word.

Now, as was the custom of that time and place, one of the members invited the teacher to a meal in his home. On this occasion it was Simon that had asked Him. This is the same Simon that Jesus had already called to be a disciple. Later on, Jesus would give Simon the nickname of Peter.

When they arrived in the home, they expressed their sadness that one member of the household wasn't able to meet greet them. They quickly informed Jesus that Simon's mother-in-law was bedridden with a fever and could not be with them.

Jesus went to her and took her by the hand and the fever left. Amazingly she stood up and began serving the meal. Jesus' healing was immediate and complete. The woman didn't even need a period of recuperation after she recovered from the fever. She was healthy enough to serve the meal.

Well, Capernaum is not that big of a town. The word got out. Jesus had driven a demon out of a man in the synagogue and then gone to Simon's house and healed his mother-in-law. News like that travels fast. As soon as the sun went down and the Sabbath was over, the area around Simon's house filled up with people who wanted healing. Mark describes it this way: **The whole city had gathered at the door.**

Jesus provided relief for those who came. He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and **drove out many demons.** Given that the healing didn't start until sundown, it's reasonable to assume that the ministry to these people lasted late into the night. The next day promised to be even busier with healing and teaching.

The only thing is that when the next day came, they couldn't find Jesus. Jesus was gone. Mark tells us where Jesus went. **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 to His Father.

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. Perhaps the best example of this is the Garden of Gethsemane where the Gospel writers recorded the actual words of Jesus' prayer ... **He was saying, "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] This was a time of temptation to abandon His mission by avoiding the cross. He could have walked away from it all - the beatings - the shame - the crucifixion - the death.

Another example of this is after the Feeding of the Five Thousand. **After He had taken leave of them, He went away into the mountain to pray.** [Mark 6:46] He prayed because the five thousand wanted to make Him king so that He could feed them free food every day. He could have been their king - been popular - had a lot of followers and so on.

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 maybe get married, settle down, start a family. 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 wasn't what He came into this world to do. He didn't leave His throne above and take up human flesh in order to be popular, or famous, or wealthy, or powerful or anything like that. Instead, He came to overcome sin, death, and the power of the devil. He came to open heaven's gates to us. He came to do His Father's will and bring eternal life to all people.

So Jesus went to the empty places, away from the people. That's 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. He remained, **He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.** [Philippians 2:8] He carried the entire burden of the world's sin to a hill just outside Jerusalem. There He allowed a crucifixion squad to nail Him to a cross. There He hung with all our sin, our burdens, our hurts bearing down on Him. It's a place of punishment. It's our punishment that He endures. It's a place of agony and suffering. It's a place of death. It's a place where even God the Father in heaven abandons Him to the evils of hell. Because Jesus never gave in to temptation, He could cry out in triumph just before He died and say, **"It is finished!"**

But this wasn't the end for our faithful Saviour. The grave couldn't 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, Simon got together a search party and looked for Jesus. Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, **"Everyone is looking for you."** Even they wanted Jesus to come back and continue healing people.

Jesus had other ideas. He said to 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.

You see, as marvellous as it was that Jesus went about healing people, it's 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. 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's 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: Jesus **went and preached in their synagogues everywhere in Galilee and drove out the demons.** With His preaching He was bringing forgiveness, life, and salvation to those places.

Now, almost two thousand years after the events in today's Gospel, 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 **He told them, "This is what Scripture has said: 'The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; 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 His spiritual and physical gifts just as He did in Capernaum. Only now He gives us medical facilities to alleviate our pain and suffering. 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. We have Bible studies to teach us why Jesus gave His life for us. We have artwork and jewellery that take us to the cross. Look around. 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. 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, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

**3rd Hymn: 846,**

### **Prayer of the Church 5th Sunday after the Epiphany**

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

*Brief silence*

P Father of glory, You are great in mercy, abundant in power and Your understanding is beyond measure. Remember Your whole Church throughout the world. Renew and strengthen Your children as they wait patiently for Your glorious salvation to be revealed. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You send forth messengers to preach the Gospel. Help all servants of the Word to proclaim Your truth with joy and zeal. Guard and protect them from the assaults of the evil one and their own flesh. Give them grace to live self-controlled and disciplined lives, that Your name may be hallowed. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Ruler of all, You sit enthroned above all human might and power. Give to all entrusted with authority among us wisdom to recognize Your rule and humility to serve the common good of our citizens. Remember all in our armed forces and our first responders in every community, and protect them in their service. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Kind One, as the people of Capernaum gathered about Your Son, bringing to Him all who were in need, we bring before You in prayer this day all who are sad and lonely, the sick and injured, the hospitalized and homebound, the anguished and despairing [*especially* / Heal the broken-hearted, bind up their wounds and give Your people grace to trust Your unfailing love. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P O Lord, You lift up the humble. Grant to all who come to the altar this day the humility to trust Christ's promise as He comes to give us His true body and blood for our forgiveness and to give us a share in His own divine life. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Holy Father, Your Son has promised to raise all the dead and give to all who trust in Him eternal life. Receive our thanksgiving for Your faithful ones who have fallen asleep in Christ and who await the moment of their final and full healing at the resurrection of the dead. Bring us with them to share in the joy of His glorious appearing. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 731,**