

Epiphany 5

Isaiah 40:21-31

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

Psalm 147:1-12, 21c

+ + + In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Last week, Fr. Jeff reminded us that our Gospel readings in Epiphany, show us that God is manifest among us in Jesus. The people who recognize Jesus as God are changed, and each person responds in their own way.

Today, Mark continues the story of the Sabbath day when Jesus began his public ministry preaching and casting out demons, showing us what the Good News, the kingdom of God among us looks like. Jesus moves from the public place of the synagogue to the privacy of the home of some of his disciples. They were present with him in the synagogue and they recognize that he has the power to heal.

As they enter their home, it is natural that Simon and Andrew, would tell Jesus about Simon's mother-in-law who is ill. Although we do not know much about her, it is likely that she is the elder in the household and in that role, she would have the honor of offering hospitality to guests. Her illness keeps her separated from her guests and from interacting with her community.

In his compassion, Jesus takes her by the hand. By his action, she is raised, moving from unwholeness to wholeness. She experiences newness of life. She is returned to her role, her place of honor, now able to offer hospitality to her guests.

Our translation of the Gospel can be a little misleading. It says that Simon's mother-in-law "began to serve them." The Greek word used here [*diakenisa*] for "serve" is from the same word that is used when the angels minister to Jesus in the wilderness. It is the same word that Jesus uses to describe his own ministry; Jesus came to serve. Simon's mother-in-law does not serve because she is compelled to. She serves out of love and out of discipleship. She serves, showing the disciples, who haven't quite sorted out who Jesus is, what following Jesus means.

This story of healing and of restoration to community, is the story of Simon's mother-in-law's call. She sees that Jesus is God, manifest in this world. The Kingdom of God is here and she is whole. She enters into her own ministry caring for Jesus just as he cares for the community as they gather around the door for healing.

Over the last month, I've thought about healing and call. I attended the funeral of a long-time friend. Together, this man and his wife ministered to my family, as they had also ministered to so many others through their commitment to hospitality, their focus on healing, and by connecting people with each other and with God.

I also met with members of the intercessory prayer ministry at St. Alban's. I listened and learned as the members of the prayer group shared their call to this ministry through which they pray for parishioners, their family members and friends.

Our services at Sleepy Hollow include healing prayer with those who ask for them or who accept the offer to pray with them. The Sleepy Hollow volunteers share the healing power of touch with each resident present. I find myself restored after these services, as I see the face of God in the residents and the volunteers.

Healing has been an important part of my own life experience and call—healing of broken relationships, healing from fear, healing of my body, mind, and spirit. Throughout my life, I've experienced God's healing through people and in community. God's love is made manifest to me through the discipleship of others. As they respond to God's love, people have ministered to me and have invited me to minister to the community alongside them.

In compassion, disciples of Jesus have taken my hand and shared the Good News as they've experienced it in their own lives. Like Simon's mother-in-law, I am most fully the person that God intends me to be when I am in a community where I can experience God's love and serve God's people out of love.

Just as the crowd gathered outside the door of Simon's home in Galilee seeking healing and God's mercy, there many community outside our doors seeking healing and mercy and seeking hope. We, who have been restored and changed through our encounters with the healing love of God can respond in love by offering hope, mercy, and healing to others. This is how we proclaim the Good News that Jesus shares with us.

Let us pray together that we can be open to sharing our own stories of healing, respond to our call to service in love, and be the manifestation of God to each other here at St. Alban's and to others in the community and the world.

Amen