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Zion Lutheran Church, Youngstown, Ohio

Weekend of Sunday, February 7, 2021
5th Sunday after Epiphany/Lectionary 5/Proper X/Year B

First Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:29-39

Sermon Title: “A Day in the Life of Jesus”

Theme

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

Text

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Sermon

Reality shows are all the rage on TV these days. Alligator hunters, gold miners, truck drivers, and Alaskan King Crab - you name it (except for pastors). I will admit it, I enjoy American Pickers and I really enjoy Pawn Stars.

I have an idea for a new reality show: “*A Day in the Life of Jesus.*” Of course, it would have to be historical because Jesus no longer walks the earth, but with today’s advancements in special effects, we could get some good insight into Jesus’ daily life. And then the show could focus in on modern-day disciples who carry on his ministry today. For example, an episode on the feeding of the 5000, followed up with modern-day disciples who continue to feed people through food pantries, soup kitchens, and other feeding ministries. I think it would be both interesting and inspiring. Just a thought.

I entitled the sermon for today, “*A Day in the Life of Jesus*” because that is what we have as our gospel text. Allow me to review.

Last week’s Gospel Reading was the first miracle of Jesus’ public ministry, according to Mark. He had just called his first four disciples; Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and then he went to the synagogue at Capernaum and boldly took the position of the rabbi and began to teach. He was quite impressive, because, according to Mark,

1:22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

But then, the Sabbath liturgy was interrupted by a man possessed with an unclean spirit. Jesus quickly and with great authoritative presence commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. He fell to the ground in what I imagine was a seizure, and then ... was as normal as anyone else in attendance. It must have been quite a thing to see! Those in attendance were impressed and said,

1:27b "What is this? A new teaching — with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

See? Don’t you agree with me? This could be a great episode in “*A Day in the Life of Jesus!*”

A little context is required for you to fully understand what happened in today's Gospel Reading.

It was the Sabbath, Saturday. The Sabbath is the celebration of the seventh day of creation upon which God rested having created the universe on the previous six days. Jews of Jesus' day and orthodox Jews today, honor the third commandment which you all know is "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy."

The Hebrew word for Sabbath is Shabbat and Shabbat is the festive day when Jews are freed from the regular labors of everyday life. It offers an opportunity to contemplate the spiritual aspects of life and spend time with family. Sounds pretty good to me! Shabbat observance entails refraining from a range of activities prohibited on Shabbat, such as lighting a fire and cooking. Therefore, for women, the traditional preparers of meals for the family, it required planning so that the three festive meals (Friday evening, Saturday morning, and Saturday afternoon) could be provided without breaking the prohibitions.

The meals begin with a blessing over two loaves of bread, or a single braided loaf which is symbolic of the double portion of manna that fell for the Jewish people the morning of the Shabbat during their forty years in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. Remember the Seinfeld episode of the fight over the loaf of marble rye? That's the stuff.

Shabbat is observed from a few minutes before sunset on Friday evening until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. Yes, orthodox Jews are that law-bound.

After the celebration is over (after the third star is spotted) families traditionally gather for the last meal, after Shabbat service Saturday evening. And this meal can be full-blown since the prohibition against work is no longer in play. This is the setting for today's Gospel Reading.

The Shabbat (on which Jesus exorcised the man with an evil spirit) was over and Jesus and his four disciples adjourned to Simon Peter's home. When they got there they found that Simon Peter's mother-in-law had gotten sick and had a fever and was therefore not able to perform her normal duties of hospitality.

Well, fresh from seeing Jesus exorcise an evil spirit, the disciples took Jesus to the woman, and sure enough, he healed her – the fever left her with just his touch.

Well, you know how life is in a small town, the word got around, and soon all the sick and possessed and dying came around. Mark wrote,

³³the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured *many* who were sick with various diseases, and cast out *many* demons...

If ever there was a drama begging to be put on the small screen this is it ... but I digress.

Notice that Mark wrote, “*many* who were sick” and “cast out *many* demons.” Hold on to that because I will come back to it in a moment.

The next morning, now that would be Sunday morning, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place and there he prayed.

Well, the disciples woke up and noticed that Jesus was gone and they went out “hunting” for him. The actual word translated for us as **hunted**, (**κατεδωξεν**, *kat-a-di-oko*) indicates the *hostile* sense of the verb.

Remember how I told you to remember that passage that indicated Jesus had healed *many* and cast out *many* demons? The reason that is so important is because of what was happened back at the home of Simon Peter and what Jesus told them they were going to do next.

Back at the home of Simon Peter, the people that were not healed the night before lined up. And as word spread around about this healer, Jesus of Nazareth, people started to come from the surrounding communities.

But notice Jesus’ response.

³⁸“Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

For Jesus, the miracles were nothing more than signs of the authenticity of his messiah-ship (we have never seen anything like this!) and signs of his Father's gracious love and forgiveness, and desire that all would be returned to wholeness – the way God created human beings in the first place back in the garden.

Jesus didn't need to heal *all*, or exorcise *all*, because he needed to move on to the next town to tell the story of God's love to them – a love so great that God would sacrifice his own son so that forgiveness could be had by all. The gate to eternal life that was closed by sin could be opened by the forgiveness won by his sacrifice. And that story is too important to be kept in Capernaum.

Friends, Jesus had the power to heal *all* the folks that turned out that day. Just like he had the power to end world hunger the day after the feeding of the 5000. But had he done that, our transformation from *needy thankless people* to *disciples shaped by his example* would never have happened.

At the end of his ministry, Jesus said, “You are impressed by these miracles I do? You will do greater things than these.” And we do.

- Each day members of this fellowship and people that you don't even know are prayed for because you value a life steeped in prayer for others.
- Each month hundreds of local families are fed through your donations of food and volunteerism through our Food Distribution.
- This past Christmas, like all the Christmases before, you anonymously gave gifts in the form of prepaid gift cards to impoverished local children to celebrate God's gift of Jesus.
- You aren't aware of it but each month I assist others with rent, gas, food, and utilities on your behalf.
- Through our monthly ministry emphasis envelopes, we support Grief Support Ministry, Youth Week of Service, Camp Frederick, other local concerns like PFS, God's Work. Our Hands Day of Service, College Care Packages, various aspects of Military Ministry, and on and on.

All because you, like Jesus, choose not to stay here in this holy sanctuary but go out there and do ministry in his name.

Raisin' the Bar Challenge

Here's what I would like for you to do. If along your journey of discipleship, someone comes to you and asks you why you are sweeping the gutters and sidewalks of Cornersburg, or providing food to hungry people, taking your precious time and resources to do some selfless task for someone else, I hope you think to say simply – "Its what Jesus would have done, and I am one of his disciples, carrying on his ministry."

And then if they ask about Jesus, tell them what you can, and then invite them to come here to meet him, because this is one place where we delight in retelling his story.

"A Day in the Life of Jesus." Just think about it. The story has been popular for over 2000 years. And I think it would please Jesus if each one of us were his co-stars.

Prayer

Loving and forgiving God, your Son and our Lord Jesus, came to demonstrate your power over human brokenness and to demonstrate godly living. Though we try, we repeatedly fall short of his example. Never the less we pray that our efforts to please you do in fact please you. And that you never give up on us, and continue to inspire us with your Holy Spirit all the more, so that we too might bring you glory. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen