

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

A day in the life of Jesus! That's what our gospel shows us this morning. Jesus has been worshipping in the synagogue, he's just cast an unclean spirit out of a man, while also teaching with an authority that none had seen before. Now he enters the home of Simon and Andrew, accompanied by James and John, he heals Simon's mother-in-law. In Jewish reckoning, the Sabbath ends at sunset Saturday and it seems like the whole city now appears at the door he heals the sick and casts out demons. Jesus has had quite a day, he's been a veritable whirlwind of activity, worship, casting out a unclean spirit, healing Peter's feverish mother-in-law, then healing still more folks while also casting out demons. So it's still dark when he goes out to pray in a solitary place, also translated as the wilderness. Now in the gospel of Mark, the word translated as solitary place or wilderness doesn't mean a desert place or something similar. Instead it reflects on Israel's time in the wilderness during the Exodus, a place of repentance, restoration and fellowship with God.

Notice that Jesus' work is both directed outward for people, and inward communing with the Father. Jesus' ministry extends from his relationship with the Father. He is both Son and Servant, one in both being and purpose in accordance with God the Father's will.

Simon and the rest search for Jesus, upon finding him, Jesus said "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came to do." We hear invitation and command, for his disciples and for us. The kingdom of God has come near, God with us, the grace of God in Jesus and his ministry. And the world is changed, you and I, the status quo are changed, discomfiting and blessing at the same time. The world changed, we are changed, reality changed.

Jesus leaves the synagogue, he casts out unclean spirits, he heals, he bids us go with him. Except now we are led into the wilderness, maybe not the desert or the north woods, but wilderness nonetheless. As we leave our familiar comfortable surroundings, we explore a landscape which leads us into the vastness of our existence. We find ourselves in the infinite, endless ocean of life. And we sometimes struggle. We struggle with some of the familiar images we first encountered as children. Miracles, miracles don't really happen any more. Do they?

But we find miraculous healings in our gospel this morning. They are more than just stories, they happened and they happen. Maybe not the way we might be hoping for when we are looking for healing for ourselves or for a loved one. But they happen nonetheless. Jesus changes people lives, he changed my life, he changed your life, aren't those miracles in and of themselves?

But we're in control, right? We're way too sophisticated to be changed by mere words from a Bible story, or even by hearing a sermon. Except we aren't. There is a vision of

love, of joy, of goodness at the center of our being. Something that is basic, the root of our understand as to who we are, as to whose we are. We are people of faith. Not perfect, just forgiven. We remember the stories we began learning as children, and these stories are our life.

We seek God, but God finds us. Jesus came out of the wilderness proclaiming a message, bringing healing, bringing wholeness. We're still not perfect, we're still not always as healthy as we'd like to be, but we are healed, we are whole. Jesus confronted and conquered the powers of the world that dominate our lives, that oppress our existence. Through what he has done on the cross, in his resurrection, through his teaching, God's kingdom, although not full realized yet, is the reality.

Jesus is clothed in the words of Scripture, but he is more than that. The Word of God became flesh, died and was raised for us. Jesus lived the message he proclaimed, from his first public ministry and his first miracle, and even now. He is what he does, and he has transformed us through our baptisms, through the Lord's Supper, through hearing his word read and proclaimed. Baptized into his death, we rise to new life, and now we are called to live this new life, to go forward in our transformations, to proclaim, to serve, to love, to give, as Jesus himself has done.

As we remember our Lord, his life, his death, his presence among us now, we hold on to something that lifts us beyond ourselves, we encounter the way, the truth and the life, we enter into an enhanced life in which healed and made whole, we speak and live the love of God.

AMEN