

Epiphany 5 B, February 8, 2009
Church of the Reformation—Lutheran, Affton, MO
Text: Mark 1:29-39

House Calls

It has been a busy morning for Jesus and His disciples in Capernaum. First in the Day Planner is a stop at the synagogue for worship and prayer and hearing God's Word. Discussion and teaching are part of the Sabbath day agenda. Then the schedule calls for a stop at the home of Andrew and Simon Peter. The day's schedule is full, so this stop will be a good time for rest and relaxation. Instead of being greeted by Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus is greeted with the news that she is sick with a fever. Instead of putting up His feet to rest, Jesus is rolling up His sleeves for work, for another miracle, for a house-call of compassion and healing.

Fevers, even today, disrupt schedules. But this fever is different, for it provides the opportunity to reveal the divine power of Jesus. So when Jesus comes into the house He gives full attention to the one who is sick: He takes her hand, lifts her out of the bed, and the fever leaves her. And Peter's mother-in-law is up, healthy, healed, and setting the table for dinner. Though she may be using the same pots and pans to prepare dinner, life for her will never be the same. She knows that in the eyes of Lord, her Healer, she is precious. Her life echoes that of her Lord. She serves. And this epiphany of Jesus' divine power points to His mission: **"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many"** (Matthew 20:28).

Word gets out. The Great Physician who had made a house call is now being called upon by the whole city of Capernaum. By suppertime, when the sun has set and the Sabbath is over, anybody and everybody in town who is sick with anything is lined up to be healed. The whole city

gathered at the door, Jesus heals “many who were sick with various diseases, and casts out many demons.” When Jesus is done, the waiting room of Capernaum is empty because every patient has been seen, tended to, and healed. Again there is the epiphany of the mission of Jesus: **“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28).

After a busy, and can we say “successful” day like that Sabbath, it is surprising that **“early in the morning, while it is still dark,”** Jesus rises and departs for a desolate place for prayer. The scouting party led by Simon Peter finds Jesus and states the obvious: **“Every is looking for You.”** Jesus answers strangely: **“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”** Jesus understands His mission. It is more than simply to go back to the successes of Capernaum and to its waiting room that is filling once again. His mission is to preach that **“The Son of Man [comes] not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”** (Matthew 20:28). It is the proclamation of God’s love for this sin-sick world that is the heart of Jesus’ preaching. His mission of preaching is the same as His mission of healing: as the fever leaves, so also the guilt and death of sin leave in His forgiveness. Jesus keeps going to the next town, preaching and proclaiming the kingdom of God, until He reaches Jerusalem where He goes to the cross to give His life as a ransom for many, as a ransom for us all.

Capernaum is miles and years away from Affton, Missouri. Yet sickness, disease, depression, even demon-possession are part of life in our homes. With our medical centers overwhelmed with the sick and the paperwork, who couldn’t use a house call from a doctor? Who couldn’t use

the good news of a miracle and a healing, the relief from worry and debt, the security of purpose and employment? Who couldn't use the peace of sin forgiven and nagging guilt wiped out?

Let's face it—we can all use that good news, relief, security and peace. And it comes from the same Servant who came to Andrew and Simon Peter's home and sick mother-in-law. It comes from the same Servant who made a house call on wee, little Zacchaeus, to proclaim that **“Today salvation has come to this house...For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”** (Luke 19:9-10). It is the same Servant who comes to the house of Mary and Martha in their grief over the death of their brother Lazarus. There the Servant proclaims, **“I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”** (John 11:25-26). It the same Servant who comes to the house of Cleopus in Emmaus and serves by taking bread, blessing it, and breaking it and giving it to the two disciples. There the Servant is known in the breaking of the bread.

The Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, came to Simon's mother-in-law and took her by the hand. His healing hand is the same hand that will be pierced for her and the whole world when Jesus pays the price for all with His death on the cross. As Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up, the fever left her; so when His hands are extended upon the cross, He takes away the fever of our sin.

What about my fever, my disease, my cancer, my depression, my ailment? Those and any other physical afflictions will be healed and taken away from you either in time or in eternity. In other words, the Lord may take the ailment from you or He may take you away from the affliction. In either case, Christ Jesus is with you and you with Him. It all emphasizes His mission: **“The Son**

of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). “Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.” She went about whatever godly duties she was given. She served those who were in her home.

Saint John puts this whole story and the story of our lives in perspective: **“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another....We love because He first loved us”** (1 John 4:10-11, 19) We serve, because He first served us. In fact, we can only serve because He serves us with His Word and His Sacraments, His forgiveness. But this truth remains: He serves us. So now, only this question remains: Where are the pots and pans or whatever else that we can use to serve one another.

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