

“Everyone is Looking for You”

Mark 1: 29-39

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

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And 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.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸ He 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.” ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

There is so much going on in this text that it is hard to focus on just one thing. Today we hear about the healing of Simon’s mother in law. Then we hear about the healing of lots of people. We are told that the whole town came and brought their sick, that Jesus cast out lots of demons. Then there’s a shift in the narrative as we are told that Jesus goes out to a deserted place so that he could be alone in prayer. This is followed by another shift in the narrative in the very next verse when we are told that the disciples came to Jesus, saying everyone is looking

for you. Jesus's response is another shift in the narrative, this time a shift in locale, a shift in his ministry, a shift in direction for Jesus and his disciples.

In just these ten verses, we have experienced so many shifts in the narrative that it is hard to determine which way to go next. Each one of these stories could have easily been a standalone sermon or conversation in faith so why does the lectionary bring them all together in one reading?

As I have lived with this text this past week, I have come to realize that it was not the lectionary responsible for this grouping of seemingly random stories. It was instead the author of Mark who brought them all together in a constantly shifting narrative. By doing this, Mark reminds his readers of the power of the Kingdom of God to transform us, to open our eyes to a new way of seeing, to a new way of experiencing the world around us.

From the very beginning of his Gospel, Mark has been telling us that God was sending God's messenger before us, that this messenger would prepare the way for us, and in response to this message, we are called to prepare the way, to make straight the paths.

Mark has been telling us that everything about Jesus would shift our understanding on how the Kingdom of God works, would shift the narrative from power and might to hope and grace. Mark has been telling us from the beginning

that everything about Jesus would shift our understanding of who God is and how we are called to be as follower of Jesus Christ.

In just these few verses, Mark gives us a glimpse into the ebb and flow of what is to come for Jesus in his ministry, moving seamlessly from private moments to public ministry and then back once more, creating connections and relationships wherever Jesus goes, and shifting from healing to preaching and teaching then back again as the need arises.

Each of these instances of Jesus' ministry shared this text is an opportunity for us as his followers to experience the good news. Each of these is an opportunity for us to deepen our understanding of the mystery of God. In just these few verses, each one of these instances of Jesus' ministry is a revealing of who Jesus Christ really is and how as his followers we are to respond to such a revelation.

And what ties these seemingly random stories all together is the disciples' statement in verse 37: "Everyone is looking for you."

We have seen Jesus as a healer. We learned that Jesus is a preacher. We have discovered that Jesus is someone who centers himself in prayer. We caught a glimpse of how Jesus interacts with people in his ministry. Through these seemingly random stories, we begin to understand how Jesus transforms us as the

people of God, because each one of these stories is a glimpse into the larger picture, into the whole story.

At this point in Jesus' ministry, Mark gives us these glimpses into who Jesus is to entice us to follow, to capture our attention. Mark gives us these glimpses into the Kingdom of God so that we will continue the journey, all the while asking....Just who is this Jesus?

I wish I could tell you that I had this really great sermon illustration to bring it all home but I don't. Like the disciples said in this text, I know so many of us, especially now in these crazy times, so many of us are looking for Jesus in their lives. I have heard so many people say that they are wanting to find some way, something which will strengthen their connection to God. almost as if they achieve or get this one thing, they will no longer have to keep looking because they will "have" Jesus.

The danger with this way of thinking is that we turn Jesus into an object. We turn Jesus into someone that thinks like us, that acts like us, that looks like and in doing so, Jesus becomes someone we control. We begin to create Jesus in our image rather than the other way around. When this happens, we limit who Jesus is. We limit what Jesus is. We limit the possibilities of new life because they do not fit into our understanding of how the Kingdom of God works.

That's why Mark gives us these glimpses, to keep us on our toes, to entice us to follow, to engage us so that we will continue on our journeys of faith. These glimpses invite us to experience the mystery of God at work in our world. They awaken us to the wonder of it all. These glimpses entice us to expand our understanding of who God is and who we are called to be as the people of God. These glimpses open our eyes to the Spirit of God, moving in and among us, bringing healing and wholeness for all of God's people. These glimpses show us that that there is no one right way, that there is no one right direction for us to take. These glimpses into who Jesus, into how the Kingdom of God works continue to shift the narrative on us. These glimpses show us time and time again, the beauty of God's transformative power in all things and through all things.

All we have to do is keep an open mind, keep an open heart, to keep looking for Jesus in all things, through all things, in all people because then and only then will we truly understand as people of faith, who we are and whose we are. Because then and only then we will truly understand what it means to followers of Jesus Christ. Because then and only then will we truly find what we have been search for on our journey.

So instead of offering some sermon illustration to tie it all together, this morning, I am offering an invitation for all us to simply embrace the journey, to open our hearts and minds to the many ways we experience the Kingdom of God in

our midst because it is through these glimpses we get a better understanding into the mysterious and life changing ways of God's grace in this world. May it be so.

Amen.