

Mark 1:29-39

²⁹As soon as they (Jesus and His new 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 sundown, 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.

Mark 1:29-39, 2015

In last week's gospel lesson Jesus had amazed the people with his power to cast an unclean spirit out of a man right there in the synagogue.

At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

As soon as they finished up at the synagogue Jesus and these four brand new disciples went over to Simon and Andrews house where they found mom in bed sick with a fever.

Jesus extends his hand to her, lifts her up and the fever is gone.

She begins to serve them.

This is Jesus' first healing in the Gospel of Mark and will be followed by many more before the sun goes down that same day.

Now Jesus first came proclaiming the good news, "the Kingdom of God has come near."

This is message that Jesus came to proclaim and by the time this passage is read it is clear that is Jesus sole purpose,
and He is intent on carrying out that mission.

But look at what has happened already.

As the story begins the proclamation begins to expand.

First to a few men he calls to follow Him.
The kingdom comes near.

Then to the people in the synagogue in His teaching
but mostly in His casting out an unclean spirit,
The kingdom of God comes near.

Then to the home of Simon and Andrew, to Simon's
mother-in-law when Jesus heals her,
The kingdom of God comes near.

The next new character in the story that will always
be around is the crowd.

The people come near to the kingdom of God
and they are healed and freed of the demons
that bind them in slavery.

Jesus receives all the people who come to him and cares for
their needs,
and in doing so gives witness to the nearness of the
kingdom of God.

Here is what I see in this brief passage that seems to be
relevant to our particular situation and context here at All
Saints this weekend.

Jesus receives everyone. He welcomes everyone who
comes to him.

From the moment when the crowds gather around the front
door of Peter and Andrew's house to get an audience with
Jesus He welcomes them.

And these are not the elite of the community. They are the
sick, the diseased, the possessed.

They are all welcomed to come near to the kingdom of God.

We are going to welcome some new people to our ministry this weekend.

They have all been here for some amount of time participating, being a part of our community.

But they will make it official today.

We welcome Jack and Sandy Boroweicki, and Don Jergenson

But before that we are going to sing a song entitled “All are Welcome” which speaks to the type of house we build here, a place where,

in the light of Jesus’ purpose in our Gospel lesson, all may come to be near the kingdom of God.

I read through it and a few phrases caught my attention:

”Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live, a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end division:”

Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat...where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they’ve known.

Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God’s face;...All are welcome in this place.”

It sounds like the same list of people Jesus welcomed are to be welcomed here;

the saints, children, thirsty, hungry,

the sick and wounded and weak, lonely and needy
and those who don't know Jesus,
the outcast and stranger who all bear the
image of God's face.

Each of you have been among those on the list at one time or another, and maybe you are now.

This is the place where you can come to be near the
kingdom of God,
in this community, around this table.

where you can be restored to a life of hope and joy
and promise.

Simon's mother-in-law gives us the model for what happens next; we get up and serve.

our calling is for one thing to be a welcoming community
that receives all who come,

and at the same time a community who reaches out
to those who have not found their way here to
proclaim the good news to them as well;
the kingdom of God has come near.

Jesus in the closing verses of this passage today, after being expected to get back to work among all the people in Capernaum who are looking for him, says,

“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.”

Jesus said to Simon and his companions, “Let us go...”

You are “us” who Jesus refers to now; we are all “us.”

Tell you neighbors, friends that there is a house where love is found, where the kingdom of God is near.

That is the good news.