

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. 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. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 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." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.



Prayer. Lord, keep us on the Jesus track of serving others in Holy love that we might continue to grow in faith and uplifted by joy. Amen.

"Sunday Service"

Being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt. Paul Tillich

In her reflection on Enlightenment, Joan Chittister wrote: Philosophers and theologians debate eternally what every human being, one way or another, comes to know without doubt: Life is a process of watching the material dimensions of the human condition slip away while the spirit grows stronger, greater, richer all the way to eternity. All the while our bodies wane, the spirit is waxing. It is the paradox of life. That's why no one is ever ready to die. The older we get the more we are just beginning to understand life and to really live it well. That process is called enlightenment (*Songs of the Heart*, p. 22). So one day a young rabbi said to the master: "You know, when I study and when I join others in great feasts, I feel a great sense of light and life. But the minute it's over it's all gone: everything dies in me." The old rabbi replied: "It is just this feeling that happens when a person walks through the woods at night, when the breeze is cool and the scent in the air is delicious. If another joins the traveler with a lantern, they can walk safely and joyfully together. But if they come to a crossroads and the one with the lantern departs, then the first must grope her way alone unless she carries her light within her." (*Tales of the Hasidim*) For disciples of Jesus our joy is carrying the guiding light of Christ within.

In his book, 'The Work: My Search for a Life that Matters', Wes Moore beautifully traced the Spirit's work of renewing dispirited souls. In a recent TV talk show the interviewer asked him: "What gives you the drive to do what you do?" Wes replied, "My childhood was troubled. At four I witnessed my father's death. When I was 11 years old I was handcuffed for the first time. So, after coming home from Afghanistan, I found myself asking the question: 'What does it mean to be successful?' For me, it was where my greatest skill set overlapped with the world's greatest need and my choosing to do something about it.' The interviewer then asked: "So in your work of re-integrating veterans into society it's not so much about doing

something for them but rather helping men and women who are already dedicated to a life of service, find a new way to serve.” “Yes, finding work that is relevant to one’s purpose in life is part of it”, said Moore. “But there is more. In one’s journey of living a life that matters, it is also important to address the question: “How do we find our greatness?” So the first question I ask veterans with whom I work is, “What are you most passionate about?” Perplexed the interviewer asked: “How can people whose passion has dried up, been lost, or denied expression begin to answer that question?” Smiling, Moore replied, “All I do is put my favorite Mom-ism into practice: ‘A person needs to know that you care before they care about what you think.’”

It must have been the same Mom-ism that Jesus put into practice after preaching in the synagogue. After proclaiming that the way to find greatness in God’s kingdom is by serving one another in Love, Jesus went to Simon and Andrew’s house (I’m thinking for lunch). The only thing he was told upon entering their home was that the person in charge of hospitality was sick in bed with a fever. In response he went to her, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. Here, Jesus did things that Jewish law forbid but that the servant Love of God required. Specifically he broke the religious law against healing on the Sabbath, he violated the gender barrier of intimacy between men and women, and he touched a quarantined unclean person.

“The fever left her and she began to serve them.”

One caring touch of Love to flame the faith of God’s healing Presence within her, fueled her passion for serving with unconditional love. (She chose to use her greatest skill set to help the family at their greatest point of need).

The miracle of faith. In ‘The Path To New Life’ Joan Chittister reflected: ‘The spiritual challenge of the moment of public rejection is to maintain a strong sense of being in the hands of God. Drawing our personal sense of self not out of the well of the past, we go on because of what we know God wants us to be rather than what we want people to think we are. Stripped of social approval, I come face to face with my need to be honest with myself. Who I know myself to be will determine what I must do to become whole again. It is inner

growth we are about now, not social cosmetics. We are being called to become the best of ourselves at the worst of times. How others treat us is not nearly as important now as what we know ourselves to be. We will not despair of God’s mercy for us. We will not betray either our hope in God or our dignity of self. We are called, in the face of the injustices against us, to refuse to be less than we have always been spiritually. We are being asked to remember that the God who created us, as scripture says, “wishes us well and not woe.” We are called to rely on that, to be a sign to all that with God we can withstand anything. Condemnation without a cause is a call to put our trust in God when the world around us has abandoned us, when there is little of our own internal resources left on which we may depend, when we find ourselves despised by those with whom we most wanted to succeed.

The verb that Mark used for “she began to serve/wait on them” is *diekonei*. Sound familiar? It’s where we get the church word, deacon. In his book, “News to Me” author Lawrence Wood noted: ‘It was Simon’s mother-in-law who first responded as so many others would, profoundly moved by the great change in her life. She was the first deacon, in the sense of becoming a servant out of reciprocal love.

“Everybody can be great . . .
because anybody can serve.

You don’t have to have a college degree to serve.
You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.
You only need a heart full of grace.
A soul generated by love.”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

After praying 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 out to do.” Jesus moved on, confident that the transforming power of God’s love that the townspeople had experienced in their personal encounter with him, had graced them with sufficient joy for keeping the Christ light of Servant Love forever burning within their hearts. As he left I imagine him saying: You are the only Jesus some people will ever meet.