



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 7, 2021

Healing for All

Mark 1:29-39

1:29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

1:30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.

1:31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

1:32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.

1:33 And the whole city was gathered around the door.

1:34 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.

1:35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

1:36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him.

1:37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."

1:38 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."

1:39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Mark continues to whisk through the life of Jesus. Already in chapter one, Jesus is busy healing. He heals Simon's mother-in-law of fever; and, she immediately arises and goes to work serving them. We know a bit about her relationship and even her response; but, we don't know her name. In fact, in this passage, we do not know the names of any of those who are healed. It is striking that the passage says, "they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons." ALL.

All were brought; and, Jesus healed many. All—the poor and “uninsured”, the rich, those with “pre-existing” conditions, the powerful, the homeless, the “undocumented alien,” the marginalized—all who needed healing—physically, mentally, spiritually--were brought to Jesus, the healer.

As we move past a year since the beginning of this global pandemic, the world needs healing most desperately—physically, mentally, socially, politically, economically, ecologically, and spiritually. The pandemic has exposed the healthcare disparities that have long existed. As many of us celebrate Black History Month, we are reminded that past racist abuses in healthcare and research have made it so that some of the ones most in danger from COVID-19 are afraid and suspicious of the vaccine. In the case of the coronavirus, healing and prevention come at a cost. While wealthy nations buy up the world’s supply of vaccines, poorer nations are forced to the back of the checkout line. When will the healing of all become the interest and desire of all—the common will for the common good?

In the USA, February is Heart Health Month (<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/education-and-awareness/american-heart-month/about>), a time for us to learn about heart disease and the things we can do to be heart healthy. In a spiritual sense, this Markan passage gives us direction as to how we can be heart healthy as well. We are called to care for the health of others, doing what we can to get them to the source of healing. We also are called to self-care. Jesus withdrew to a deserted place to pray. In the midst of so much need, we may feel guilty taking some “me-time;” but, self-care is necessary for our health and the health of others to whom we are called to serve. Simon’s mother-in-law could not serve until she was healed. As our ancestors sang, we should find time and space to “steal away.”

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, where is your “deserted place”? How often do you go there to pray and engage in other spiritual practices that give you strength and renew you?

PRAY:

Gracious God, heal our land. Heal us. Heal ALL. In the name of Jesus, the Great Physician, AMEN.

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, what can you do to help others find the healing they need? Family histories are important to record and share, so are family health/medical histories. Do a family health/medical history. Here are some ideas as to how: https://www.cdc.gov/genomics/famhistory/famhist_basics.htm In this Season after the Epiphany, do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

Song:

Lift Every Voice and Sing
AMEC Hymnal, #571

Lift ev-ery voice and sing,
Till earth and heav-en ring,
Ring with the har-mo-nies of lib-er-ty;
Let our re-joic-ing rise

High as the lis-tening skies,
Let it re-sound loud as the roll-ing sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Fac-ing the ris-ing sun of our new day be-gun,
Let us march on till vic-to-ry is won.

Ston-y the road we trod,
Bit-ter the chas-tening rod,
Felt in the days when hope un-born had died;
Yet with a stead-y beat,
Have not our wear-y feet
Come to the place for which our fa-tthers sighed?
We have come o-ver a way that with tears has been wa-tered,
We have come, tread-ing our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloom-y past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our wea-ry years,
God of our si-lent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might, Led us in-to the light,
Keep us for-ev-er in the path, we pray,
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we for-get Thee;
Shad-owed be-neath Thy hand,
May we for-ev-er stand,
True to our God,
True to our na-tive land.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.