

## **A Day In The Life**

A Sermon by  
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It's your baptism day, Miss Madelyn. It's a day of new beginnings for you, you who are in the beginning of life. It's a day that your Mom and Dad will mark from here on out, not to mention Grandma and Grandpa, who have been so much a part of this church we may wonder why there isn't a maple leaf on the cornerstone of this building with their names attached.

It's your baptism day, and on this special day it is only right that you be given an idea of what you are in for. As if any life in Christ can be totally informed of what lies ahead. There will be all kinds of twists and turns, peaks and valleys. But on this day we get a glimpse of the life we are called to lead, and that glimpse is given by no less than the One in whose name we baptize.

We get that glimpse through the courtesy of the oldest Gospel in the book, the Gospel of Mark. It's the opening chapter of this Gospel, which begins not like the other gospels, taking their time, wandering through Jesus' family tree. In Mark it is a full-throttle dash through the orchard, clipping off one event after another, with the words "immediately" or "at once" punctuating throughout as if Jesus is in a bit of a hurry.

We come into the story in mid-stream, with Jesus performing miracles of healing and the word beginning to spread about him everywhere. This is news too good to keep to one area. And so it is that Jesus enters the home of two of those he called, Simon and Andrew, and comes across Simon's mother-in-law, sick with an illness. We don't know if she had the flu or rheumatic fever; it was bad enough for her to be bed-ridden. But Jesus goes up to her, extends his hand and helps her up. And she begins to wait on them.

To which some of us might say "Great! This poor lady gets healed only to have to get up and get to work. Isn't this like everything else - where a woman is expected to get out of bed, no matter how sick they are, and wait on a bunch of guys!" Yes, it looks like that. But we're not talking about the movie where a lazy lug played by Will Farrell is always yelling out to his mother to make some meat loaf for him. There is another story at work here. You have to fast forward in Mark a little bit to get it. In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, Jesus is walking with his disciples, when two of them ask him to put them in the place of honor in his eternal kingdom. After Jesus tells them that this is not something for him to grant, the other disciples grumble at the audacity of these guys, and then Jesus sets them all straight. He points out to them what they see, what we see – all kinds of people jockeying for prominence, trying to impress people with how much they know, with who they know, with how much influence they have. But, Jesus says, it shall not be so among you. "The Son of Man" – read, I, Jesus – "came not to be served but to serve." Serving is not menial labor for someone else to do. Serving is what marks us as followers of Jesus. Jesus came to serve. So if we really want to do the Christian thing, if we really want to

follow Jesus, if we want to be like him, then serving others is one of those things that are at the top of the do-do list.

Mark continues his journey and shows us that Jesus healed people. Jesus serves by healing. We may wonder, "Well, I can't do that!" But there have been some rumblings of the Spirit around here lately. There are some folks who feel that we are called to be involved in the ministry of healing. Jesus is the One doing the healing, but sometimes people need others to bring them to Jesus; or they need others to bring their needs before Jesus. This is not some kind of voodoo here. This is a spiritual walk, an admission that if healing takes place, it will be the Triune God who does it. But healing can take place through us. We can follow Jesus by continuing his work of healing.

The story moves on, the story that tells us what life following Jesus looks like. Before it looked like a track meet. Now the pace has slowed considerably. It's early morning, way early morning. Before anyone else is up. Jesus slips out of the house and heads off out to a deserted place. Why not out there? Nothing's open this early. But that's not the point. He's starting his day the way he probably always started his days. He starts it in prayer. He starts it by talking with The Creator, whom he termed in the Aramaic "Abba." The rough translation is "Daddy," but even that doesn't quite get it. There is endearment in this relationship, intimacy, closeness. God is not some abstract concept for Jesus but a dynamic, loving Presence. God the Father and God the Son are intimately connected, yet there needs to be communication between the two. A relationship with anyone always needs communication to deepen it. That is no less the case here. So Jesus goes to a lonely place to pray, to talk, to reconnect.

Jesus serves, Jesus heals, and Jesus prays. When we walk with Jesus we are called to be active, to be involved, to work for justice in our communities and in our families. But we are also called to carve out time in our days to be still and listen. To be still and share honestly with a divine Being so loving and intimate that we are not sharing anything new. God just wants us to level - to get down into the depths of who we are and share where we are with God. Someone has said that prayer doesn't change God, but it sure does change us. It changes how we look on life; it changes how we think about ourselves; it changes how we feel about God. It brings us closer with the One who made us, the One who wants us to draw closer.

But there is one thing more. Jesus does something else in addition to serving, healing and praying. Jesus sends. He sends himself – but not just himself. If he had done that, he would have said, "I am going..." But he doesn't say that. He says, "We must go on to the other villages ... I have to preach to them, also, because that is why I came."

In these days of the church of Jesus Christ remembering that we were called to do more than just take care of ourselves we hear these words as being the pinnacle of what it means to follow Jesus. It means to be sent out in his name. It means to be missional. We must go, Jesus says. That means that when we go, we never go alone. He always goes with us, to empower us, to challenge us, to comfort us.

What does it mean to go to other villages? To go to Bethsaida and Jericho, perhaps? To go to Sheffield Lake and Lorain, maybe? Yes, but not only that. The villages have other names, the villages Jesus sends us to:

The village of fear – so many people are fearful these days, fearful of the economy, of the future, of what will happen to our children. Jesus sends us to remind people in those villages that Jesus walks with us in our fears and transforms our fears into opportunities to feel his love in a new way.

The village of doubt – so many people now doubt how a loving God can make so many bad things happen. Jesus walks with us into this village to tell the good news that God doesn't make bad things happen; God gives us the strength and the courage to face bad things when they do.

The village of grief – so many of us have been in this village. Perhaps we know it well. It looks a lot like the other villages, because fear and doubt make up a big part of this place. But Jesus sends us here to remind those who make their home in this place that nothing – not even death – can separate us from God's love in Jesus.

The village of anger – there are some of us who have spent so much time in this place we own some stock in the place. We love to be angry; we love to vent; we love the power it gives us. But it's power is often illusory. It's not real. It's phony. And then we are lonely, because who wants to be with an emotional porcupine? Jesus does. And Jesus sends us here, too; to help people know that God loves them, even when they are spewing. Jesus has been here, too. He knows this place. Jesus was angry – angry when people let religious formality get in the way of a dynamic relationship with a loving God. This is not a bad place to be. It's a place Jesus sends us to preach good news and experience transformation.

The village of consumerism – this seems to be a new village, but it's not. It's an old temptation to think that if we can keep buying things we will be happy. But it's just a mask we put on to keep from being in touch with what we are really feeling. Jesus sends us here to remind folks that they are more than what they can buy. They – We – are precious children of God whose value is far deeper than what can be bought or sold.

There are other villages we have been sent to. But we are always sent there by Jesus. We are sent there to share the good news of his love, the love that has claimed us, the love that has called us by name, the love that has grafted us onto his body.

It's your baptism day, Madelyn Grace. But in a special way it's also a re-baptism day for all of us. For we have all been given the call - to serve, to heal, to pray, and to go. The call came when our names merged with God's name, and the waters of grace touched our souls. The same water that touches you this morning has touched us. We have been called by the same God to remember we are one in the name of him who served, healed, prayed and went. Who calls on us to do the same thing. Amen.

Bible Text is Mark 1:29-39  
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