

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

2/4/2018

Mark 1:29-39

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Jesus left the synagogue at Capernaum, and 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.

Listen to a story:

"Hey, Father," said a man talking to a priest. "You got it all wrong about this God stuff. He doesn't exist and I oughta know."

"Why's that, my son?" asked the priest.

"Well," the man said, "when I was ice-fishing in the Arctic far from the nearest village, a blizzard blew up with wind and blinding snow. I was a goner. So I got down on my knees and prayed real hard, begging God for help."

"And did He help you?" asked the priest.

"Heck no," said the man. "God didn't lift a finger. Some Eskimo appeared out of nowhere and showed me the way." [King Duncan, www.Sermons.com]

Pause – well I guess it is easy to underestimate the value of a God-sent Eskimo every now and then.

I presume some of us have been there – deeply desiring something from God (maybe a prayer needing answer; maybe help and courage needing delivery; maybe health and wholeness needing to come our way) and then not being aware of it being filled or happening.

If so, then we have much in common with those folks in Capernaum.

Now I know you expected me to preach about Capernaum since I have been there four times.

It is now an exposed archeological site – a deserted village, it was in Jesus' day a bustling town of 350 or more folks – many of whom like Peter and his brother Andrew made their living from the Sea of Galilee as fisherman.

Capernaum had a large synagogue (since it was a Jewish village) and that synagogue is about as far as from here to the back of the nave (or sanctuary) from the house of Peter's mother-in-law.

Since in Mark's gospel, Jesus has just healed a demon possessed man in the synagogue – a crowd is soon for the mother-in-law's house – for in a place this small – secrets are hard to keep – especially something as dramatic as a healing of a demoniac – but even more so the healing of a woman (Peter's mother-in-law) and on the Sabbath at that.

And the crowds come streaming – for they all want and need something from Jesus.

“Everyone is searching for you,” Mark's gospel proclaims of Jesus.

They were searching for Jesus because they were broken – they were ill; they were hurting; they were empty; their lives were drudgery. They lived in a broken world. I understand why they came streaming to Him there in Capernaum – even to the point of demanding from Jesus – everyone lived in that broken world.

"Everyone is searching for you," the disciples tell Jesus. Jesus has been busily healing, teaching, and casting out their demons with an authority that had even the scoffers talking – even those who didn't think this whole thing worked were talking about Him.

Jesus was sought after because he was the fullest expression of God seeking relationship with a broken humanity.

"Everyone is looking for you," the disciples tell Jesus, and Jesus in essence says, "That's good because I'm looking for them. That's why I've come. Let's go to all the people in these parts with the good news that God is with them and loves them." [Brent Porterfield, www.eSermons.com]

Perhaps my friend's husband is in touch with his and our world. Everything Is Broken. We too live in a broken world as broken people.

Some things have not changed since Jesus' days in that small fishing village at the north end of the Sea of Galilee.

A contemporary writer named Robert Zimmerman, once detailed the list of things that were broken.

Everything Is Broken, he said: Broken bottles, broken plates, broken switches, and broken gates.

There are broken dishes, broken parts, streets are filled with broken hearts. Broken words, never meant to be spoken, everything is broken. There are broken bodies, broken bones and broken voices on broken phones.

There are broken treaties, broken vows, broken hands on broken plows. Broken pipes, broken tools, people bending broken rules. Everything is broken.

The bad news is that everything is broken. Lord have mercy! [Michael D. Powell, A Ministry of Healing]

And then this is where Jesus comes in: there is nothing in life that cannot be healed – even though sometimes the answer may come in the form of a timely Eskimo.

There is a story that Tony Campolo tells:

It is set in heaven where as usual St. Peter is handling admissions and the apostle Paul is in charge of administration of the entire heavens and part of that duty involves a monthly census of heaven's inhabitants.

But something doesn't add up. Each time Paul counts the number of people in Heaven, his number far exceeds the number of admittances that Peter has registered.

This discrepancy mystifies them both for quite a while.

Then, one day, Paul runs up to Peter and excitedly shouts, "Peter! Peter! I figured out why our numbers don't match. I figured out why there are so many more people in Heaven than you're letting in at the pearly gates. It's Jesus! It's Jesus! He keeps sneaking people over the wall." [Tony Campolo, *letters to a young evangelical* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2006), pp. 49-50.]

Everyone deep down wants what only Jesus can provide – you and me too.

"Everyone is looking for you. . ." said the disciples to Jesus. It was truer than they knew. And it is yet truer today.

He is the answer to every man's, every woman's, every young person's deepest need. He gives us direction and purpose for our lives. We never need fear what lies ahead for he goes with us.

My prayer for you and me is that we recognize how much we need this Jesus in our lives – that we recognize what is right here in front of us in Him who is the fullest expression of God seeking relationship with a broken humanity.