February 4, 2024 **SOURCE OF STRENGTH**

This Sunday’s gospel passage St. Mark 1:29-39. We learn that Jesus’ preaching and healing ministry had some very profound consequences for those who received the gospel message and were healed by Jesus. This passage in Mark’s gospel gives us the opportunity to ponder the healing work of Jesus. In the Mark gospel, approximately one-third of it is composed of Jesus’ healing miracles. For Mark, Jesus often combines his words with his works and his actions. This passage reminds us that the ministry of Jesus preaching the gospel and healing people of all manner of illness and disease caused by sin and evil.

I believe that we, particularly as Christians need to take the healing ministry of Jesus more seriously. It is no accident that in the New Testament Greek, the word “to heal” also means “to save.” Jesus saves people through healing them of physical, mental, emotional, and other diseases and illnesses. In doing so, Jesus is demonstrating the power of God and of the gospel to the world.

In the Bible, healing is the symbol of redemptive grace and a manifestation of God’s love. Healing and salvation are constantly associated. In Jeremiah. 17:14 we read “Heal me o Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for thou are my praise.”  In I Kings 8:37-39, When Solomon, having completed the building of the Temple, is addressing to God his magnificent prayer of consecration, he asks God to comfort them with His blessing in all their troubles - calamity, disease, and sin…

Jesus performs His miracles of healing in order to relieve the suffering of those who appeal to Him, but He always performs them in order to show forth God’s power as well. When Jesus sends his disciples two by two as we read in Luke 9: 2 “He set them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.” The gift of healing played a large part in the primitive church. We read in I Corinthians 12: 9 “to another faith by the same Spirit to other gifts of healing by the one Spirit.”

The human condition over the centuries has not changed, we are all sinners and we’re all tempted by the powers of evil, therefore all of us are in need of God’s gift of healing through Jesus Christ, whether the healing be physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. All of us suffer from our own personal brokenness as well as the brokenness of our society, the world and yes, even the church. As we encounter Jesus in today’s gospel, we learn the flow of Jesus’ ministry. He traveled from place to place preaching the Good News “And healing those who were possessed by demons and afflicted with all kinds of illness and disease.”

Mark tells us that when the people of Capernaum got word of Jesus’ message and works of healing, “the whole city was gathered” around the door of Simon Peter and Andrew’s home. Jesus responds, according to Mark like this: “And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons.”

In Jesus’ day, it was commonly believed that demons, evil spirits entered into people’s minds and bodies, thus making them suffer from mental illness and physical diseases, and therefore they were regarded as spiritually unclean. Jesus as the Healer and Savior of the world came to radically change all of that. From beginning to end, Jesus was at war with all evil powers, as the Son of God, he had power over them, casting them out of people and in so doing, people were healed mentally and physically and thus became spiritually clean.

Jesus knew that the powers of evil function to hurt and divide human beings; they are happy if people destroy themselves and others; illness, diseases, hatred, slavery, divisions; violence, death and destruction are what the powers of evil promote. Jesus came, he says in John ’s Gospel 10:10, “that we human beings may have life, and have it abundantly.” He invites us to seek out his Good News and His healing grace. He comes to cast out the sin and evil that afflicts us, whether it is physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. He comes to offer us his forgiveness, his love and freedom. He comes to give us both salvation and health. If you would like to learn more, please join us in our Sunday worship at 11: 00 AM.

Peace!

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