

“That is Why I Have Come”

Rev. Erika Martinez-Flores
Mark 1. 29-39
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Westby UMC & Viroqua UMC

Mark wants the readers of his writing to perceive in the ministry of Jesus, described in his words and stories, how an evangelical urgency. The immediacy of Jesus' message is based on his saving action for human beings. That is why Jesus is presented in Mark as the bearer of the good news of the Kingdom of God that has approached (Mk 1:14-15). In his words and actions on behalf of the suffering, oppressed and afflicted people, Jesus is proclaimed by Mark as the Son of God, in whom the Father finds happiness and pleasure.

After having exorcised the demon-possessed man in the synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus and his four new followers (Peter, Andrew, James and John) head to Peter's house in Capernaum (v. 29). It should be noted that Capernaum in the time of Jesus was a fishing village on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was not the economic or social center of the Jews of the time. It was rather a town subordinate to the city of Jerusalem, where the religious, political and economic power of the region was located. It is important to remember these details, because the marginality of the Galileans in the socio-political, religious and economic framework is an important fact to understand the Gospel of Mark, and therefore, the ministry and person of Jesus.

Without understanding the marginality and oppression experienced by the community of Galilee, the place where the announcement of the good news of the Kingdom of God begins, we can make the mistake of not understanding its liberating impact for the marginalized communities of its time.

Although Mark does not mention the name of Peter's mother-in-law, as happens with many women in the Holy Scriptures, the hospitality, and her desire to serve are mentioned, after being healed (v. 31), she is a living example of the words of Jesus, who is described in Mark 10:45 as the one who has come to serve and not to be served.

The Greek word used by Mark to describe the service given by Peter's mother-in-law is Diakoneó. Diakoneó literally means raising the dust with your feet when going from one place to another. It is a word that implies movement and is used in the New Testament to describe service or ministry done in the name of God to the community. Since Jesus is the servant par excellence of God towards the community, Peter's mother-in-law shows us with her actions what it means to serve God and, that is, serve one's neighbor.

On the other hand, we see that Jesus approaches this woman, whose name is not even mentioned and, to make matters worse, she is sick (impure). And against all odds Jesus “takes her hand” and “lifts her up.” When Jesus makes the woman stand up from her, he is also restoring her dignity. The good news of the Gospel is that the Kingdom of God has approached humanity from the margins, to lift us from the power of death.

It is important to see in the healing of Peter's mother-in-law a foretaste of the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection as victory over death and over everything that oppresses us.

The text gives us other information. It narrates that when it was evening, the people came to Jesus with all of his sick and demon-possessed people, and Jesus healed them. How many evils he removed from the bodies of that population! But the most important thing is to confirm that Capernaum was a sick society. If we look around us today, we find similar situations; Most of our social spaces are sick and each of us are part of them. Physical, psychological and emotional illnesses.

In the midst of these sick societies of yesterday and today, according to this text, Jesus performs two more actions that surprise us, or at least they should.

The first action that Jesus performs, after having been in contact with so many sick bodies, is to leave at dawn and go to pray in a solitary place. Jesus needed those moments of stillness and solitude, prayer was his strength, his vital space. Otherwise he would not have been able to sustain his mission of preaching, healing and teaching.

The second surprising action of Jesus is the response he gives to his friends when they tell him that everyone was looking for him. Jesus invites these four men (Simon, Andrew, James or James and John) to go to “the neighboring places” (v. 38); He encourages them to walk throughout Galilee. To enter the synagogues and preach, heal and expel evil.

We encounter Jesus with an act of humility that few teachers have. He doesn't expect to be thanked. He only decides to leave because he knows that human needs abound in every corner of his land. In Galilee, a fertile territory, but damaged by bad policies and constant disagreements with the empire in power. An impoverished and sick territory.

Jesus knew that many would not agree with him, but he was not worried, because he also knew that the only way to restore the dignity of his people is by not putting limits or conditions on his mission; On the contrary, he snatches encounters, touches people, gets closer to them and shares the hopeful word of the gospel so that each of them can begin a new life within the Kingdom of God.