

5TH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 02/04/18

Mt. Calvary, West View / Pentecost, Avella

ISAIAH 40:21-31, I CORINTHIANS 9: 16-27, MARK 1: 29-39

Theme: Ministry Epiphany

+ **Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +**

Our Text is taken from the continuation of St. Mark's Gospel, the 1st chapter:

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for Him, and they found Him and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." And He said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." And He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Epiphany season is the great season where we see Jesus revealing Himself to be the Son of God, and hear yet again the great message, *“The Kingdom of God is at hand; Repent and Believe the Gospel!”* However, there is more to reveal about this Jesus of Nazareth ó He is also true man. Unlike Uber cars, the ministry is done by human believers, and not by robotic automatons. You may have noticed that this was a long day for Jesus. First off, as we recall from last Sunday's pericope, this is a Sabbath day, a day Jesus is supposed to be resting, yet He stood up and taught in the Synagogue. Sure, there is supposed to be a day of rest, but there is no rest for the preaching of the Gospel! After all, the salvation of man is more important than personal comforts, so preaching and teaching are not in violation of a day of rest. Note as well, Jesus was not just preaching and teaching, but also administering some healing. Again, all this being done on the Sabbath ó the man possessed with demons, and then upon reaching the house of Peter's mother-in-law, removing her fever with just a touch of His hand. Notice also, there seems to be no Pharisees around to complain about working on the Sabbath, so Jesus is free to minister to the people and offer the Word of God through the healings.

Having accomplished all up to this point, we rejoice that Jesus can take a moment and relax with the disciples and their family, perhaps even a little more light-hearted instruction of answering some questions here and there, for the preacher's work is never done. Yet upon night fall, when the Sabbath is over, the people come disrupting the Teacher, demanding that He heal their sick, their infirm, their family members riddled with diseases. Perhaps this is one reason why Jesus demanded the demons to be quiet ó He needs His rest! After all, everybody needs a time to relax and recharge, and Jesus as true man is no different. Yet, there is something more to Jesus's desire for the demons to be silent ó so Jesus could get the message out without distractions. It is a great fear that the people would be more attuned to the need for miracles, rather than hearing the message of repentance for Salvation. Yet, the people arrive. There are needs being brought to Jesus, and He willingly heals the infirmities of all before Him ó He missed not a one. Tired as He is, the message needs to be preached ó even if nobody is there because of the message, the message will be preached.

So, Jesus, in the middle of the night, after finishing His last miracle of healing, goes away to a desolate place; a place that He has not been to before. In Luke we are informed that His most popular place to pray is the Mount of Olives, otherwise called Gethsemane, but that is later in the ministry. Today, Jesus goes off on His own to a solitary place to meditate, rest, and communicate with the Father through prayer. The last time Jesus went to a desolate place, well, He was met with the devil and had to endure 40 days and 40 nights of temptations. What, pray tell, is Jesus enduring here? Well, to me it is quite clear that Jesus is trying to get the ministry centered upon the right reason ó to preach and teach the Gospel, not be some traveling med-express. In my humble opinion, the sad thing we have in this text is that Simon went out and hunted Jesus down. Hunted Him, he did; this tells me much. Jesus went away to *not* be found,

He wanted His alone time to be with the Father and honor the Commandments, as He is to do to win for us our salvation. He also did not bring the disciples along because they are to be resting as well with their own meditations and sound sleep. Yet, they went searching for Jesus, possibly at the behest of the crowd looking for Him. They went so they would not have to deal with the overwhelming crowd. I can hear them say, "Look at the great crowd! Let us go find Jesus so He can deal with them!"

Upon finding Jesus, the disciples inform Jesus that "Everyone is looking for You." So, what is Jesus to do? I guess it depends on *why* everyone is looking for Him. If they are looking for Jesus so that they can learn more about the kingdom of Heaven, I seriously doubt He would leave, for, as He responds to the disciples, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out." He came to preach and to teach; He came that man may repent and believe the Gospel; He came to save us from our sins, but He cannot do any of this, if the people are only looking for miracles, and not the Word.

How many people have you known, or simply heard about, that have fallen away from the faith because they expected a "miracle" and did not get it? I myself have heard of such things, but I have not had the pleasure of conversing with such a person. It seems to me the problem is not that the miracle was denied, for many times God does not grant what we want. We are sinful human beings and are totally prone to desires that are certainly not beneficial to us. Yet, God tells us to ask for anything in His Name and it will be answered! This is not a problem, we can ask for everything, our Lord will only give us what we truly need. So, the problem of people who have fallen away because they asked and did not get is not in the fault of the asking. The problem is in the person asking not having a faith grounded in the Word of God.

Jesus came to preach and to teach the Good news about why He came ó to save you from your sins. The miracles were to point to Jesus as the Messiah Who has come so you can stop looking. If this were not enough, then recall the Baptism of Jesus where the Father expressly declares, *“This is My Beloved Son, with Him I Am well pleased.”* Indeed, even of old, the people needed to hear that wonderful Word of God! Isaiah in our Old Testament reading today reminds us that if we have only known, that if we had just listened to God, then we would know that He is *the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth*. If we would just place our faith and trust in Him, repent and believe that He is Almighty God able to save, then we would be restored to our former glory, renewed in strength. Indeed, His promise endures today that those who repent and turn to Him, *“they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* Many have construed that this is a promise to all that just call themselves Christian, therefore, they conclude, when they do grow weary and faint, then God has forsaken them. But the truth of the matter is, God restores the humble, the meek, the downtrodden, all people that place their whole faith in Him, and when confessing their sins, they are covered in the blood shed from the cross of Calvary, forgiven of all sins, and are restored to newness of life, by faith alone. You are so restored this day, in confessing your sins you are able to rise up forgiven, go forth to preach the gospel that has restored you. Your baptism has now saved you so trust in Him above all things and share this great news with all you meet!

This is what Paul is getting at when he encourages you to also preach the Gospel free of charge. We do not impose ourselves upon others, nor do we expect people to be fully able to comprehend the *genus magestaticum* before they are worthy of hearing God’s Word. We meet people where they are and bring them along in the increase of knowledge of God. All things to all people means we want all people to hear the Gospel and believe. So, if we want to reach the

poor and hungry, then let us collect food and assistance, and bring it to them, that they can hear and believe the Gospel, and trust the blood of Calvary to be their salvation.

This is the ministry, to preach the Gospel. Helping neighbors in need is a great way to introduce them to the living Gospel. If all we are doing is just giving them food and clothing and sending them on their way, then we can do that with robotics. But if we did just this, it would be an epic fail to be as Christ and give them hope and salvation in Him. Jesus kept preaching so more would hear, may we preach the Word, and make more hearers as well. In His most Holy Name we pray. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN+

Offering / Prayers

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment.