

Jesus Putting Action Where His Mouth Is
Mark 1:29-39
Colebrook Congregational Church
February 8, 2015

Mark's Gospel does not waste too much time on details; the transitions have frustrated scholars who have tried to understand Jesus' timeline; and Mark uses broad general statements to just move the narrative along. The second part of our selection this week is like that. Afterward, Jesus healed the whole town, there were many of them, they praised him, and he moved on. Very little detail. The first part of the selection is a bit different. It has some detail about Simon Peter's home, and gives us a more detailed picture of Jesus performing a miracle.

About a third of Mark's Gospel consists of miracle stories. Some of the other gospels refer to Jesus' miracles as “signs,” but not Mark. The Greek word he uses is δυνάμεις, which translates more as “mighty works,” or “symbols” of the power of God manifested in Jesus, that authenticates his ministry.

Leaving the synagogue, Jesus and his four Disciples went to Simon Peter's home. I've wondered what the conversation with Peter's wife went like. I bet she had some things to say about Peter's sudden shift in occupations. I wonder if she confronted Jesus himself.

Yet, Jesus purposely hid who he truly is until the crucifixion, so to Peter's wife, understandably, Jesus was just some guy who convinced her husband and brother-in-law to walk away from their business, endangering their livelihood, to fish for a different catch.

But then, her mother came down with a fever. And because Peter, and his brother Andrew, left their boats, they probably didn't have a disposable income to go buying medicine. This probably made the Simon Peter household very tense when he, and his brother, this guy Jesus, and two other guys walked in.

That probably all changed when Jesus healed her mother. That mighty work, that dynamis, must have been quite the authentication of the ministry of Jesus for her.

In a chapter filled with healings, and so much more, packed in to it, Mark took a verse to describe Jesus' actions. The others described what Jesus did superficially, or what Jesus said. Here, Mark tells us how Jesus sat with Peter's mother-in-law, and he took her by the hand, and healed her, and lifted her up. Amongst all the public and impersonal accounts, Mark gives us a personal and private account.

How I see this part of the selection, how Jesus had just left the synagogue after teaching and preaching there: is that now he is putting into practice what he was preaching. Jesus preached a message of love, of caring for our neighbors, and then we are told that after he left the place where he said that, he immediately started to do that. He starts ministering and healing those in need around him.

We should ask ourselves: Can we say that we have done the same? When we leave here, do we put our faith into practice? Jesus did so immediately. On the sabbath. Walked out the doors of the synagogue and immediately headed to Simon Peter's house to do a mighty work. It's harder for us to do the same immediate action today. Many people are home with families, or resting on Sundays, so what of the other days? Have you been in a situation, be it big or small, and wondered if you are putting your faith into practice?

And we don't have to say it aloud or make it known that is what we are doing. During my first tour in AmeriCorps, I was stationed at an elementary school in inner-city Worcester, and I was primarily in a first grade classroom. The teacher turned to me one day and asked me why I joined AmeriCorps. It was not asked in a conversational, trying to get to know me sort of way, it was in more of a why would anybody choose to do such a thing sort of way. I tried to explain succinctly how I was putting my faith into action. She did not understand that, and the conversation did not go very well after that.

So I have found that it is better to just do. When I first arrived in Worcester, I was the only person on my team that was not from Worcester, and my teammates made sure I acclimating to the new city, and they told me a bunch of stories about parking in the wintertime. A lot of the parking in Worcester

was on-street, so in the winter, people just shoveled themselves out and then placed a lawn chair or even a proper wooden chair in that spot. There was a lot of animosity if you parked in a spot that someone else dug out. Thing is that when you only dig yourself out, just right around your car, there are these snow walls between the spots, so there weren't as many spots as usual for everyone.

Shoveling myself out, I had a lot of time to think and to ponder. I looked at the snow wall between my car and my roommate's car every so often while I was shoveling. I found myself thinking that if I put my faith into practice, I should just shovel that part as well. Should I? I considered Jesus' teachings, and I decided, yes, I should. I saw my neighbors watching me shoveling a couple of these walls, opening up a lot more space for us to park. Next snowstorm, I did the same thing, a couple neighbors joined me, and the next, even more. Instead of everyone just being selfish our street became clear and we were all less stressed about the parking. I know it sounds like a little thing, but it was quite a stressor in a dense city.

We should all ask ourselves, How do we put our faith into action? How do we at church? At home? And in our lives out in the world? If we are not, how can we? Each of us different, so there is no one answer. Each of us has to look inside ourselves, consider the example of Jesus, make our own discernments, and then act upon them.

Prayers of the People

[pause]

Gracious God,

Friend of those in need, your Son has untied our burdens and healed our spirits. You call us to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit; through loving your creation and our sisters and brothers. You invite us to hold the needs of our brothers and sisters as dear as we hold our own. Open our hearts in compassion and receive these petitions on behalf of the needs of our community and the world. We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened, those seeking healing, those in need that we have raised up, and those we have kept in our hearts.

We offer prayers...

Hear our prayers that we may love you with our whole being and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Your voice enlightens the depths of our being, Hear these petitions of your people and speak a word of comfort, that we may proclaim to all the earth the glory of your name. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Offertory

O God, we offer these gifts to be used to benefit your church and our mission throughout the world. Bless the giver and those who cannot give. Grant us the wisdom to use these gifts in the manner you want us do. Amen.