



ZLC TEXT MESSAGE

Exploring the Bible One Text at a Time

Creating a Place for All to Worship

Pastor Vern Christopherson, preaching

Introduction: Things happen quickly in the gospel of Mark. In rapid fashion we hear about John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism, his temptation in the wilderness, the beginning of Jesus' preaching, the call of the first disciples, and Jesus' first healing. And this all happens in the opening 28 verses. No wonder that one of Mark's favorite words is "immediately." As readers, we can't help but get caught up in the drama and start wondering what Jesus will be up to next. One thing is certain, the news about Jesus is spreading quickly and the crowds will soon be clamoring for his attention.

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they 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 sunset, 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.

Scripture

Reflections

Mark paints a picture of human need and suffering. We see that need on a small scale in Peter's mother-in-law. We see it on a large scale in the clamoring of the crowds. After responding to their needs, Jesus withdraws to a deserted place and prays. This is a rare glimpse into Jesus' humanity. His life is marked by the rhythm of work, rest, and prayer. In times of stress and decision, Jesus turns to God for strength and guidance.

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Notice what happens next. Jesus' prayer time gets interrupted by Peter and company. The clamoring of the crowds has grown louder. Clearly the disciples don't know what to do, so they "hunt" down Jesus and lay the problem at his feet. Jesus' response is noteworthy. He doesn't necessarily promise to give the crowds what they want—more miracles—but instead promises to "proclaim the message" he's been given to share. In so many words, Jesus affirms that the core of his ministry is not performing miracles, but rather preaching. And the message of his preaching is simple, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe the good news."

Our congregational focus, *creating a place for all to worship*, will occupy much of our attention in 2012. I look forward to a wide variety of conversations, both about the things that matter most in worship to us and about how we might envision worship for those who are not yet here. If this story says anything to me, it says that the crowds are still clamoring for healing and wholeness and peace. The best thing we can do is point them to Jesus and to the good news Jesus offers all of us. It might not seem like a miracle, at least not at first glance, but who knows what will happen when Jesus' good news gets inside of us and starts making our hearts new.

Food for Thought

Name 4 or 5 needs that people bring with them to worship?

How do you see worship possibly speaking to those needs?

Further Reading

Isaiah 40:21-31

