

Mark 1:29-39

Epiphany 5; February 4 & 5, 2018

Last weekend, Nancy and I went out to New York City for 3 days to celebrate my wife's birthday. I found some cheap airfare on Southwest. Used points for a hotel stay. You might remember me talking about the only other time that we had been in New York City. I drove into the city with no map and no real idea as to where to go. This time was different. I read about it before we went. I looked at maps before I went. I knew where the subway lines would go. We had a pretty good of an idea as to what we wanted to see.

Last Saturday morning, we set out to see as much as we could in three days. We see the World Trade Center Memorial. We took a ferry out to the statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. We walked half way across the Brooklyn Bridge, went up to the top of the Empire State Building, and walked around in Times Square at night. That was only day 1. Over the three days, we figured we walked 27 miles, crisscrossed back and forth on miles of subways. As we sat in LaGuardia for our return flight, we both realized that our legs wouldn't be able to keep that kind of pace every day. I don't know how long I could do this?

Ever felt like that? I don't know how long I can do this? You are getting no sleep at night because your baby is not feeling well and only wants to be held as you walk up and down the hallway. Things haven't been going well at work. You know that there are people who don't like you. You have to pour more and more hours into a project that has to get done. The long hours and lack of sleep is getting to you. I don't know how long I can do this? You have to take care of your aged parents, and you are getting tired yourself and you begin to think: I don't know how long I can do this? You have given all you can give, and you are at your rope's end, and you think: I don't know how long I can do this?

Ever felt like that? If you have, you are not alone. For thousands of years, God's people have felt like that. We are like the disciples in our text looking for Jesus and can't seem to find him. When they do, they come up to him and say: **"Everyone is looking for you!"** In other words: *Where were you Jesus?* Let's see this morning that Jesus is always near to those who are in need.

Where are you God? There is no doubt that the man in our first lesson felt that way. The life of Job had turned terrible. In one day, Job went through hell on earth. He lost everything.... His wealth, his sons and daughters, his servants, everything. Then he lost his health, his friends turned on him. It is no wonder that he said: **"my eyes will never see happiness again."** I don't know how long I can do this? Where are you God? His problems just seemed too big for God.

I wonder if the disciples felt a bit like that at times. On this day in our text, Jesus was going to answer that question and show them that there were no problems that are too big for our God. He starts with Peter's mother-in-law. Mark writes: **"Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them."** How serious was this fever? We don't fully know? Was it a good case of the flu bug or a cold? Or was it life-threatening? I'm not sure that it was on the same level of suffering as Job was. Regardless of the intensity of the fever and illness, it was no problem for Jesus. Immediately, the fever is gone and she goes about her work in the home again.

They once again saw Jesus answer that question: *I don't know how long I can do this?* Word got out to the people around the town what Jesus had done that day. They heard him speak with authority. They saw him drive out demons, as we had seen in last week's Gospel Lesson, which are the words before our text. Now they heard about Peter's mother-in-law. What happens? The doorbell begins to ring all night. Mark tells us: **"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."** Again and again, he healed, he helped and he cared. He wanted them to know that Jesus had everything under control.

He wants you to know that as well this morning. Jesus answers that question for you today: *I don't know how long I can do this?* He knows how to handle all that the world throws at us. Always has and always will. That's hard to trust, isn't it? He knows your health problems. He knows the diseases that you have that have no cure. He knows the rheumatoid

arthritis that I will always have. He knows the relationship challenges that you may be facing in your marriage, in your homes, with those in church. He knows the spiritual challenges that you face every day. He says to you: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”**

What do we say to those who are beaten and broken? Isn't that the reason that Jesus came into this world? He came to fix the broken. Jesus didn't come to rub shoulders with just the successful and wealthy. He didn't come to give a motivation speech to those who are trying real hard to face these challenges on their own. He didn't come to pat those people on the back who think they have it all together and figured it out by themselves. He came for the sick, the dying, the poor, the tax collectors, the lepers. He came for people who are broken because of sin.

Jesus came to preach the good news of the Gospel. Look at what Paul says in the second lesson for today. He gives us everything we need at that time. That may mean that he doesn't always give me what I want or think I need. He doesn't always take the problems away. Sometimes, he simply says that he will hold our hands as he walks with us. Perhaps, there are times that God reminds us that we are weak so that we give up this idea of self-sufficiency. Maybe he wants us to look at the question: *“Do I follow Jesus because of who He is, or because of what He can do for me?”*

So, how do we keep that focus in our life? We ask him to help us. After a day of preaching and a late night of healing, Jesus got up early to talk to his heavenly Father in prayer. **“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”** Talk to Jesus. Ask him to help you. He is the one who will give you what you need to answer the question: *I don't know how long I can take this?* There is nothing too big or too small for him. You have no need to fear tomorrow. Your God goes with you. That is why he came. Amen.