

On the Move

Each of the four Gospels gives us a distinct, but different portrait of Jesus. To know Jesus as the Christ, Our Lord, we need the full portraits from all four. This was obvious to the Prayer Book revisionists in the 1970s who changed the Gospel readings from the same ones each Sunday of each year to a three-year cycle. This year we are hearing from Mark. Mark's Jesus is the non-stop Son of God who preaches and heals and ultimately dies on the cross to bring God's Kingdom to earth.

Today we are still in the first chapter of Mark's Gospel, starting at verse 29. His first eight verses begin with John the Baptist. In verse 9, Jesus is baptized; in verse 12 he goes into the desert for 40 days; in verse 14 we hear that John the Baptist has been arrested and Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee; in verse 16 the first disciples are called – Peter, Andrew, James and John, the fishermen – who leave their nets to follow Jesus; in verse 21 they are in a synagogue in Capernaum and Jesus heals a man possessed by demons. Have we caught our breath yet?

Today we hear three more stories in just 10 verses: Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law; Jesus healing many who were sick and demon-possessed; and, then, Jesus getting up early in the morning to pray and get ready to continue his ministry through all the towns of Galilee. Jesus is on the move.

Two weeks ago, our middler seminarian, Ashley Mather, preached about the calling of the first disciples, the fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James and John. She reminded us of the miracle that comes when we hear Jesus' call, and decide to follow. And she told us how fast-paced and action-packed Mark's gospel is, appealing to his Roman readers. Ashley mentioned how often Mark uses the word "immediately."

For some reason, I realized that the translation we normally use for our readings, the New Revised Standard Version, has eliminated nine of the 35 uses of "immediately" in the Revised Standard Version, including two in the reading for today. Maybe the scholars decided to slow down the action! It was just too fast. "Immediately they left the synagogue and immediately they told Jesus about Simon's mother-in-law..." God is on the move, instantly active, each hour, each day. I'm not sure we can keep up with God. The Spirit is moving here and now. We are called each hour, every day to see God at work and to help God work.

Last week, at our Annual Meeting, we celebrated how active God is in the ministries we share at this Church. We began with a celebration of our Outreach Ministries. We ended when I awarded the Rector's Cross to Judy Willard and the 25 Food Pantry volunteers who help thousands of people every year. This is just one example of Christ "on the move" throughout our parish.

Athletes know how important movement is. St. Paul talks about "running the race." Tonight a few of us might be watching the Super Bowl. The team that moves the football and scores the most will win. We win when we follow Our Lord out into the world – healing, helping and proclaiming God's love. This work, this mission never ends. We are always on the move.