

“What Are We Searching For?”  
Psalm 147:1-11; Isaiah 40:21-31;  
Mark 1:29-39

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Everyone was searching for him. It made me wonder, what do I wake up in the morning and think about searching for in the coming day? Do I just wake up and think about the tasks ahead, the constraints I have? What are the things I might want to have happen? What am I searching for each day?

When these folks woke up, they were searching for Jesus. It made me wonder how many times I wake up and the first thing I might think about is how I might search again for how Jesus is in my life, how Jesus is present, what Jesus might be guiding me to do and think about. Certainly, these disciples – brand new to their relationship with Jesus, recognizing in him someone who might change them, who might guide them, who might teach them – woke up and found Jesus wasn't there and went searching for him.

We might think about why their search to find Jesus was so urgent. They had experienced one who had called them to become his disciples, called them to join him in his ministry, to be those students under the rabbi, the teacher. They were excited about that. Then they heard him begin to teach and to do so with authority. He brought good news of God's presence with them, God's kingdom among them. So they went to find him.

They also had this experience of him healing Simon's mother-in-law, which enabled her to get up to serve. Then the townspeople gathered around to be healed by Jesus. There was something about that as well that probably worked into their desire to find him. Certainly, some of the townsfolk may have been thinking, “I have this ailment or that,” and they may have been looking for him just to be healed.

As we go through the Gospel of Mark, there is a lot of healing in it. As we think about the healing Jesus is doing, I would remind you that it's a little different than going to a physician. We have such a particular model of what healing is. We have this medical model that knows of germ theory and how viruses and bacteria and all those things cause disease. We would do well to remember that in Jesus' day there was no sense of

today's medical understanding. Illness, be it physical or what we would consider a biological disease, was never just a biological illness for them. It entailed all of who they were, because being ill could mean you were unclean. And if having a disease meant you were unclean, then, being unclean caused breaking the bonds of relationships within the community. Because they didn't have a sense of non-personal causes the way we do, the biological causes, they saw so much as being a personal force causing things—demons or gods at work. Their view in some ways was much more wholistic than ours. We have tended to put things in categories, and yet even today we realize that our social and mental and emotional health can affect our physical health, and the other way around. It is really more of a whole than we tend to think.

So as we think about Jesus healing, we need to realize that it is not just a healing of a body. In fact, if you look at the word for "sickness" here, it really is more that people were coming to him in a way that it was their own wretchedness, their own bad position. There's a sense that somehow evil entered their lives. Jesus was addressing this core issue, not just the physical, but the whole of what they brought, of who they were. Indeed, it's hard for us, I think, to even think about how they would have thought about themselves as ill and come to be healed because they were separated from a family or community due to their disease. We are so individualistic in our world that what we think about is our own health. I think they would have had much more sense that their good health included how they were connected in their community, when they were in the right place in their social setting. Their identity, their sense of self, was more a sense of one in the community together.

As Jesus comes to heal, as Jesus offers the healing, he invites them to be healed in multiple ways. Body, soul, spirit, social, emotional, and relational healing are all part of what he brings. One clue that Jesus wasn't here just to bring physical healing is that when the disciples arrive and say, "Everybody is looking for you," he doesn't say, "OK, let's set up shop and start healing people." He says, "Let's go to another community so I can bring the message that I have come to bring."

We never see Jesus do what we would think of as a mass healing, either. He always heals individual people. It feels to me like what he's saying, the core of what he's bringing, is a message that brings that healing for everyone. Each of us will have our individual demons, our own

struggles that need to be healed, and that healing we can find in the message he brings and in him as Christ, for he brings the real healing, the real presence of God, the grace we need that takes care of the root causes of the evils in our lives that keep us from being alive and real and his.

In some ways, it feels to me like that description of him taking the hand of Peter's mother-in-law and lifting her up, and that she begins to serve, is the very thing he comes to do for all of us. He comes to heal us of that obstacle in our life that keeps us from fully engaging in his kingdom, that we might truly serve the world we live in and be his people.

Indeed, as the disciples realized they needed him, they went searching for him. I think they were surprised by the fullness of what he could do. The teaching and healing that got to the core of life, to the core of their need, and started them on a new path. He engaged them in something new that would bring new life.

As Jesus starts in his ministry, we have this invitation to start with him, to allow ourselves to be fully open to how he brings that healing, not only of body, but of all of who we are. Removing the forces of evil that get in the way and letting us engage in the grace of God, the love of God that enables us to live out being God's people, God's children.

We are given reminders, like the Communion table we have before us today, that God is with us. God continues to sustain us. God offers us a grace that is the sustenance we need in so many ways, and enables us to live that new life, to be alive as God engages with us. So as we come today and we think about this story, about the searching and the surprise and the way they got started, it makes me wonder how I wake up each morning. They say that each new day brings a new beginning to our lives. Do I wake up thinking there might be something worth searching for, some surprise awaiting me, that will start me again on the path of grace and goodness and will allow me to live into the kingdom of God?

What do I wake up searching for? I want to wake up searching for Jesus and the grace he brings, the goodness he shows us, and the way he leads us. Amen.