

**Mark 1:29-39**  
**February 4, '18**

**“DELIVERED FROM OR FOR?”**

**THIS WEEK, IN “THE MESSENGER” – OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER – I SUGGESTED THAT ONE OF THE REASONS I FIND MYSELF DRAWN TO PREACHING FROM THE LECTIONARY IS THE WAY IN WHICH IT CONNECTS US TO OTHER CHURCHES.**

**IT ALWAYS AMAZES ME TO THINK THAT, ON ANY GIVEN SUNDAY, IN OUR OWN COMMUNITY, THERE ARE 20 TO 30 SERMONS BEING PREACHED ON THE SAME PASSAGE.**

**WHAT’S EVEN MORE AMAZING IS THAT EVERY ONE OF THOSE SERMONS WILL BE DIFFERENT.**

**THEY WILL FOCUS ON DIFFERENT VERSES OF THE SAME PASSAGE & PROCLAIM A MEANINGFUL MESSAGE THAT WILL BE AT LEAST SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER SERMONS THAT ARE PREACHED FROM THAT SAME PASSAGE.**

**THIS MORNING, AS WE LOOK AT THIS LECTIONARY READING FROM MARK, I’D LIKE TO FOCUS ON JUST 3 OF THE 11 VERSES KARLA READ FOR US THIS MORNING.**

**I’D LIKE TO STAY CENTERED ON THE FIRST THREE VERSES BECAUSE, WHEN I THINK OF THIS SECTION IN MARK, IT’S THIS EVENT THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MOST INTERESTING TO ME – AND MOST TROUBLING AS WELL.**

**I TRUST MANY OF YOU WOULD SAY THE SAME THING.**

**AS YOU LOOK AT WHAT UNFOLDS HERE IN JUST THESE 3 VERSES, I THINK IT’S DIFFICULT NOT TO VIEW THIS EVENT CRITICALLY & CYNICALLY.**

**HERE’S HOW I’VE ALWAYS PICTURED THIS SCENE PLAYING OUT:**

**JESUS HAS HAD A REALLY STRESSFUL & BUSY DAY.**

**LAST WEEK, WE TALKED ABOUT HIM PREACHING & HEALING IN THE SYNAGOGUE.**

**PETER SAYS, “I’VE GOT A GREAT IDEA – WE’RE NOT THAT FAR FROM MY PLACE. WHAT DO YOU SAY WE STOP IN & TAKE A BREAK. LORD KNOWS YOU NEED IT!**

**GET IT, JESUS? THAT WAS A JOKE AFTER WHAT YOU JUST DID IN THE SYNAGOGUE – ‘LORD KNOWS?’**

**ANYWAY, I REALLY THINK A LITTLE R&R WOULD DO YOU GOOD.**

**AND, I GOTTA TELL YOU – MY MOTHER-IN-LAW IS ONE FABULOUS COOK!**

**SHE’S PROBABLY WORKING ON A GREAT MEAL FOR US RIGHT NOW.**

**YOU DON’T EVEN KNOW WHERE I LIVE BUT YOU CAN JUST FOLLOW YOUR NOSE & THE DELECTABLE AROMA WILL LEAD YOU STRAIGHT TO MY PLACE!”**

**WHEN THEY GET THERE, THOUGH, NOT ONLY ARE THERE NO TANTALIZING SMELLS EMANATING FROM THE KITCHEN, PETER’S MOTHER-IN-LAW IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.**

**YOU SEE, ALL OF THAT IS THE PICTURE I HAVE IN MY MIND ABOUT THIS EVENT WHICH THEN TAINTS THE REST OF IT FOR ME.**

**WHEN YOU READ THE LAST OF THE THREE VERSES ON WHICH WE’RE FOCUSING – AND WHEN YOU DO SO WITH THAT KIND OF UNDERSTANDING LEADING UP TO IT – IT’S HARD NOT TO BE CRITICAL & EVEN A BIT CYNICAL BECAUSE IT LEAVES YOU WONDERING IF JESUS’ SOLE PURPOSE IN HEALING THIS WOMAN WAS SIMPLY SO SHE COULD GET UP & FIX HIM SOME DINNER!**

**MARK SAYS, “HE CAME & TOOK HER BY THE HAND & LIFTED HER UP. THEN THE FEVER LEFT HER – AND SHE BEGAN TO SERVE THEM!”**

**PLEASE – TELL ME I’M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO’S HAD THAT THOUGHT ABOUT THIS PASSAGE!**

**THE QUESTION WE ASK OF PETER, THE REST OF THE DISCIPLES AND - DARE I SAY IT - JESUS HIMSELF, IS “*COULD YOU GUYS NOT LET THAT POOR WOMAN STAY IN BED & GET YOURSELVES SOMETHING TO EAT?!*”**

**LET ME QUICKLY ADD THAT THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF DIFFICULTIES WITH MY UNDERSTANDING OF THIS PASSAGE & THE WHOLE THING LEAVES US WITH SOME UNANSWERED QUESTIONS – QUESTIONS LIKE - WHERE WAS PETER’S WIFE – HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW’S DAUGHTER – WHILE ALL OF THIS WAS PLAYING OUT?**

**AND WHY HAVE I CONCLUDED THAT WHEN MARK TELLS US SHE “SERVED” THEM THAT HE MEANS SHE FIXED THEM A MEAL?**

**THE BIGGEST QUESTION PROBABLY SURROUNDS THAT WORD “SERVE” AND WHAT IT MEANS & HOW MARK INTENDS US TO UNDERSTAND IT.**

**IT’S ALMOST AS IF WE LOOK AT THAT WORD NEGATIVELY – AS IF THIS WAS SOMETHING SHE “HAD” TO DO OR SOMETHING SHE’D RATHER “NOT” DO IF GIVEN THE CHOICE.**

**BUT, YOU KNOW, I THINK IF WE LOOK AT SOME OTHER EXAMPLES OF HEALING IN THE GOSPELS, MARK IS SIMPLY TELLING US THAT THIS HEALING WAS REAL & IT WAS COMPLETE & IT HAD A PURPOSE BEYOND SIMPLY MAKING SOMEONE WELL.**

**FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN JESUS HEALED A BLIND MAN, WE’RE TOLD THAT HE WAS ABLE TO SEE.**

**WHEN HE HEALS A PARALYTIC, WE’RE TOLD THAT HE WAS ABLE TO WALK.**

**MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, WHAT DID THAT BLIND MAN WANT?**

**HE WANTED TO SEE.**

**MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, WHAT DID THAT PARALYTIC WANT?**

**HE WANTED TO WALK.**

**MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, WHAT DID PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW WANT?**

**SHE WANTED TO SERVE.**

**IT'S INTERESTING THAT THE GREEK WORD THAT IS USED HERE FOR "SERVE," IS "DIAKONAI."**

**IT'S WHERE OUR WORD "DEACON" COMES FROM.**

**THAT'S WHAT BEING A DEACON MEANS – IT MEANS SERVING.**

**MARK HAS ALREADY TOLD US EARLIER IN THIS VERY FIRST CHAPTER THAT WHEN JESUS WAS TEMPTED BY SATAN IN THE WILDERNESS, ANGELS CAME & "SERVED" HIM – THE VERY SAME WORD!**

**SINCE HE HAD JUST TOLD US THIS A FEW VERSES BEFORE, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT SEE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SERVICE OF THE ANGELS & THE SERVICE OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW.**

**SHE WAS ACTING AS AN ANGEL.**

**LATER ON IN MARK, WHEN THE DISCIPLES START ARGUING AMONG THEMSELVES ABOUT WHO WILL BE THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, JESUS DESCRIBES HIS MINISTRY AS ONE IN WHICH HE CAME – NOT TO BE SERVED – BUT TO SERVE.**

**IT'S THE EXACT SAME WORD!**

**HERE AGAIN, PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW WAS DOING PRECISELY WHAT JESUS HIMSELF DID!**

**IN BEING HEALED OF HER ILLNESS, SHE WASN'T JUST DELIVERED "FROM" SOMETHING – SHE WAS DELIVERED "FOR" SOMETHING.**

**ALL TOO OFTEN, WE WANT THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD WILL DELIVER US *OUT OF* SOMETHING – OR *AWAY FROM* SOMETHING – OR *FROM* SOMETHING AND WE DON'T REALLY THINK ALL THAT MUCH ABOUT BEING DELIVERED *FOR* SOMETHING.**

**THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WEREN'T JUST DELIVERED *FROM* THEIR BONDAGE IN EGYPT.**

**THEY WERE DELIVERED *FOR* THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING AS A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS.**

**MANY OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE WELL-KNOWN WORDS OF PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER & WRITER FREDERICK BUECHNER WHO SAID, "*THE PLACE WHERE GOD CALLS YOU TO IS THE PLACE WHERE YOUR DEEP GLADNESS AND THE WORLD'S DEEP HUNGER MEET.*"**

**YOU KNOW THAT GOD HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN YOUR LIFE.**

**YOU KNOW THE COUNTLESS WAYS IN WHICH GOD HAS WATCHED OVER YOU & CARED FOR YOU & PROTECTED YOU.**

**YOU KNOW THE TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS FROM WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN DELIVERED.**

**BUT DON'T LEAVE IT AT THAT.**

**LOOK BEYOND WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DELIVERED *FROM* & SEEK TO DISCOVER WHAT IT IS YOU HAVE BEEN DELIVERED *FOR*.**

**THAT'S THE "GLADNESS" OF WHICH BUECHNER SPEAKS.**

**IT'S GREAT TO BE THANKFUL & RELIEVED WHEN YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED GOD'S ALMIGHTY HAND AT WORK IN DELIVERING YOU FROM THE ABYSS OF PAIN & MISERY.**

**BUT DON'T LEAVE IT AT THAT.**

**IF YOU DO, YOU'RE ONLY EXPERIENCING HALF OF THE BLESSING THAT GOD HAS IN STORE FOR YOU.**

**THE OTHER HALF IS DISCOVERING WHAT GOD HAS DELIVERED YOU *FOR*.**

**ONE OF MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE STORIES IS SOMETHING I REMEMBER READING WHEN I WAS JUST A TEEN-AGER.**

**IT WAS THE STORY OF A DEVASTATING STORM THAT HAD DESTROYED A TINY VILLAGE IN AFRICA.**

**SCORES OF PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED OR INJURED & VIRTUALLY EVERY BUILDING IN THE LITTLE VILLAGE HAD SUSTAINED DAMAGE OF SOME SORT.**

**THERE WAS A MAN WORKING TIRELESSLY AROUND THE CLOCK TO HELP IN ANY WAY HE COULD – BANDAGING THE WOUNDED & PUTTING BUILDINGS BACK TOGETHER.**

**WHILE HE WORKED, HE SAW A YOUNG MAN SITTING DOWN ON A STOOL, READING A BOOK.**

**THIS WORKER APPROACHED THE YOUNG MAN & INQUIRED AS TO WHY HE WASN'T JOINING THE EFFORT TO HELP.**

**THE YOUNG MAN SAID, *"I'M A SCHOLAR & SCHOLARS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO WORK."***

**AS THE WORKER TURNED AWAY, HE SAID, *"I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A SCHOLAR MYSELF. I GUESS I JUST DIDN'T MAKE IT."***

**THAT WORKER WAS NONE OTHER THAN ALBERT SCHWEITZER.**

**"DIAKONAI" – SERVING – ISN'T SOMETHING FOR THOSE WHO "HAVEN'T MADE IT."**

**SERVING IS STEPPING INTO THE ROLE OF AN ANGEL.**

**IT'S STEPPING INTO THE ROLE OF CHRIST HIMSELF IN A HURTING WORLD.**

**OUR PRAYERS TO GOD SHOULD NEVER BE CONFINED TO SIMPLY A REQUEST TO BE DELIVERED *FROM* SOMETHING.**

**IF THAT'S ALL WE TAKE WHEN A REQUEST HAS BEEN GRANTED, WE'VE ONLY TAKEN HALF THE ANSWER THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US.**

**OUR PRAYERS SHOULD INCLUDE A REQUEST TO DISCOVER WHAT IT IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED *FOR*.**

**IT'S IN THE *FOR* OF OUR DELIVERANCE, THAT WE WILL FIND OUR GREATEST JOY, OUR GREATEST GLADNESS, OUR GREATEST FULFILLMENT.**

**MARK SAYS SOMETHING VERY SIGNIFICANT AT THE END OF THESE 3 VERSES – SOMETHING THAT COULD EASILY BE OVERLOOKED.**

**THE END OF VERSE 31 READS – “...*THE FEVER LEFT HER AND SHE BEGAN TO SERVE THEM.*”**

**IT'S THE “BEGAN” PART OF THAT VERSE THAT'S IMPORTANT.**

**GO BACK SEVERAL WEEKS AND YOU'LL RECALL THAT WE FOCUSED ON WHAT MARK MEANS WHEN HE OPENS HIS GOSPEL BY SAYING “*THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL...*”**

**HE DIDN'T JUST MEAN THE FIRST EVENT OR THE FIRST CHAPTER.**

**HE MEANS THAT HIS ENTIRE GOSPEL IS SIMPLY THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY.**

**SO, TOO, IN THIS INCIDENT WITH PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW.**

**I THINK MARK INTENDS US TO UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT SHE DID THAT DAY WAS SIMPLY THE BEGINNING OF A LIFETIME OF SERVICE.**

**AND SO IT IS WITH US AS WELL.**

**EVERY DAY PRESENTS US WITH A BRAND-NEW OPPORTUNITY TO  
DISCOVER WHAT IT IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED “FOR” – THE  
CHANCE TO SERVE IN THE PLACE WHERE OUR DEEP GLADNESS &  
THE WORLD’S DEEP HUNGER MEET. AMEN.**

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