

Doing Discipleship – Brief Reflection

A message shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

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by Rev. Dave Le Grand

Reading: The Gospel according to Mark chapter 1, verses 29-38¹

As we prepare to hear a story from Mark's Gospel, it is helpful to know that Jesus and his friends have been in the Synagogue for the Sabbath where Jesus has been amazing people with his teaching and healings.

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus, James, and John went home with Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed, sick with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she served them.

That evening, at sunset, people brought to Jesus those who were sick or demon-possessed. The whole town gathered near the door. He healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases, and he threw out many demons. But he didn't let the demons speak, because they recognized him.

Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he could be alone in prayer. Simon and those with him tracked him down. When they found him, they told him, "Everyone's looking for you!"

He replied, "Let's head in the other direction, to the nearby villages, so that I can preach there too. That's why I've come."

Dave's Brief Reflection:

First: In the Gospel of Mark, there isn't the flow of the other Gospels. Mark tells the story as it is. It is almost like talking points – first Jesus did this, then Jesus did that. There can be a frenetic quality to the days Jesus experienced, like the one we hear about today.

Also, it is worth noting that Jesus takes time "away", to a deserted place, to pray and meditate – we might say, to clear his head. The press of demands as he returns to his friends is immediate. Did we hear Jesus' response to the demands?

"Let's head in the other direction...so I can preach there too."

We might sit prayerfully with how Mark tells us that Jesus responded to the fray of life, the pain, the healing needed – by the way, Bible scholars suggest that demon-possessed is very likely an ancient aphorism for what we would call today mental health issues.

Do we feel a sense of that "press of demands" upon us, ? Individually? Collectively as St. Andrew's United Church Community of Faith?

How might this story speak to prayerful listening to a new sense of call for our church in the midst of challenging times?

¹ Common English Bible (CEB) © 2011 by Common English Bible

Reflecting on being the people of God

Congregational Conversations (at Tables)

Do you feel the “press of demands” on St. Andrew’s United Church? If yes, in what ways?

How might the response of Jesus in today’s Gospel guide our faithful response to those demands?