

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Sermon by Father David Bumsted

*Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Good Morning!

Back home, we had a phrase that we all used when we about to do something really stupid, or something really awesome. Of course, growing up around skateboards, surfboards, alligators, and constant heat meant that stupid and awesome were not necessarily mutually exclusive. But when it was time to launch off a ramp with absolutely zero hopes of landing, when it was time to really impress your friends, there were three words that always fit the mood: they were of course, "Hold my beer."

Now I'm sure those words have never been uttered or heard in such a place as Tulsa. But for us back in the Central Floridian bush or beach, the "hold my beer" moment was always going to be revelatory, always going to prove how stupid and/or awesome we were. But those times when we overcame the challenge, finally landed the trick, didn't get attacked by wildlife, and so on? Those were the times that proved who we were, the times when our names would echo through the ages.

Not really of course, but we were young and silly. And it was a lot of fun.

But when last week's Gospel lesson ended, when after the seas and wind had been stilled by Christ's command and the disciples asked, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" I can't help but think that Jesus was ready with an ancient Galilean version of our youthful call (Hold my chalice, perhaps?) because what was coming next, much of which we read today was indeed revelatory. Not for silly mischief of course, but very much for an answer to who he is and what he was here to do.

The whole of the fifth chapter of St. Mark's account bears this out. Our text today begins midstream in chapter 5, after a familiar episode in Jesus' ministry. After the stilling of the sea and wind, the shore that Jesus and his disciples reached was that of the Garasenes. As Jesus went to that country to preach and heal, he met a man who lived among the tombs, a man who lived among the dead, who was taken captive by many evil spirits. You may recall that Jesus released him of his chains, banished the legion of evil spirits in to the swine, and told the freed man to tell all the people of the surrounding community about what Jesus had done. In summarizing it so quickly, I've done an injustice to the text and it's worth our deeper consideration sometime soon. But suffice it to say that Jesus was out to show that the one who would still the waves was also one that would come to purify evil and cast out the spiritual forces of darkness.

Just after Jesus and his friends returned from their trip, Jesus was once again confronted with someone bound by calamity, this time the ruler of the local synagogue, a man called Jairus. Now, this is totally an aside, but I can't help but point out that our Gospel lesson today, in describing the ruler of the synagogue contains my favorite word in Greek: *Archisunagogon*. It's just fun to say, I guess. But Jairus begged Jesus to come with him to attend to his daughter, who was at the point of death. Interestingly, Jairus knew that Jesus would be able to heal by the power of his touch. Mark tells us that Jesus went along with Jairus to help.

But then, a very interesting thing happened along the short journey to Jairus' household. We heard about this poor woman who had been suffering from some terrible hemorrhaging disease. Mark is very clear what the stakes are with this terrible disease. Not only did she feel terrible for twelve years, but seeking after cures had left her destitute, with no help from the local doctors. Mark is also indirectly telling us that this woman was essentially unable to participate in the community, and because of the nature of her disease, would have been estranged from her family and support structure. Desperate for healing from her ailment, for a new lease on life, she reached out for Jesus, even for his clothes, so that he would heal her. And she was, her grasp at Christ's garments cured her disease immediately. Jesus appreciated her trust that even a small contact would make a big difference. He sent her way, healed of disease, ceremonially pure, and ready to rejoin her community. The same Jesus that stilled the sea and the wave, was the one who would, even just by contact with his clothes, cure dread disease and reconcile the estranged by his power.

But in all the commotion around the woman on the way to Jairus' house, sadly his daughter passed away. Mark takes an unflinching tone in his telling of this episode as disappointment, grief, weeping, and wailing. The commotion Mark records for us is a far cry from the text immediately preceding. Where we can get a little warm and fuzzy from the lady healed from her disease, I always read the death of Jairus' daughter with a bit of a gut punch. Her family waved Jesus off, ready to acquiesce to the tragic pattern of the world they knew, that the dead stay dead. But Jesus was undeterred, entering into the horrible churn of great sadness announcing that the girl was only sleeping. I'm not sure I'll ever fully understand the reaction of the grieving family as they laughed at him; perhaps they knew and loved him enough to not take offense at such an incredible claim. In any case, Jesus simply took her by the hand and commanded her to get up. And she did, walking around like a regular twelve year old. I love that Jesus final act of care for her was to make sure she was fed. And surprisingly, he told the people around her not to say anything about it, contrast with the man cleared of legion, and the woman healed of the disease.

Even as Jesus told Jairus' family to keep quiet, the careful reader or listener to Mark's account of the Gospel has learned A LOT about Jesus and the true nature of his ministry. In Jesus, we find someone who when the apostles ask who is this, that can calm the chaos of the weather and water, he answered with a tour of confronting and with major forces of human suffering and uncertainty. This is the kind of Messiah that the earliest disciples met back in

Galilee; who we meet this morning. The Lord of Creation who came to be among us to set us on a path towards restoration and re-creation. If the end of last week's Gospel lesson was indeed a "Hold my chalice" moment in the mission of Jesus, by the end of Mark's fifth chapter, we know that Jesus was and is engaged in setting the world to rights.

So what would we do with such a person as we seek to follow him? For me, what I read in Mark's fifth chapter is that I can trust Jesus with whatever vexes me. And you would think that after some years of being a professional Christian person that I'd be better at trusting him with all my concerns. But I suppose it's lessons like this one from Mark that help orient my heart towards greater trust that Christ can deal with that which I bring to him. If a worried father and a sick woman can approach Jesus with the faith and trust that he would heal and restore them, so can I bring my cares and occupations to his feet and ask for his help. And you know, even though I still need practice asking, every time I do, I find that he always rises to the challenge and through his work in me, even with the silly stuff I bring to him, is his great glory revealed. I pray that whatever bedevils you this coming week that you would be given an extra bit of grace to trust in Jesus, that he would indeed bring his love and mercy to you just as he did to our friends we met this morning in the Scripture.

To God be all glory, From Age to Age. Amen.