

Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Reverend Dr. Daris Bultena

February 5, 2012

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 40:21-31

²¹ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;

²³ who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,

and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Mark 1:29-39

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

"By The Hand"

"He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them."

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Jesus takes her by the hand.

There is that connection there. Jesus takes her by the hand. There is that intimate nature of touch going on. Simon's mother-in-law is touched by the Lord Jesus Christ there in her sick bed. She is not alone with this burden—Jesus is there.

It is our sickness, it is our paralysis. We think we are on our own in this life. The crisis comes and we think that we are stuck out there on our

own. The struggle comes along and we think all that we have to rely on is our own self and our own resources.

We have become so convinced of our being on our own and our being alone in this life that we have learned well the social method of fronting to the world that we are “okay.” “How are you?” comes the question, and our answer is the always, “I am fine.” Or, “I’ great.” Or maybe even, “I’m well.”

Jus the other day I was asked, “How are you?” And you know what I said: “I’m fine.” I wasn’t fine. My hard drive on my computer had crashed. My allergies were active because of this weird weather. My email was inaccessible because of my computer problems and I was just all stressed out. But how did I respond to the question. “I’m well, and how are you?” I didn’t just say, “I well,” I even tilted my head and half smiled in genuine fashion.

All things considered I was fine. It was a computer and at best a few deadlines missed. It was not as if I had malaria or had lost a limb. Take an allergy pill; shut up already!

Well, see here, it is what we are taught to do. Front the best to those around us. No whining about our situation. No feel sorry for yourself. Nobody really wants to hear it or even cares for that matter. See, see that is the lie of the culture speaking. It re-enforces the idea that we are on our own. It isolates us. It separates us from any connection to others and tells us over again the best distance is a safe distance.

Such is not the way with Jesus. He takes her by the hand. He is not at a distance. He is close enough to take her by the hand. He is there and present and with her.

It is well time we get that. That we are not on our own here. That no matter what response we utter to others regarding our wellness, Jesus is there taking us by the hand. He has a hold on us. He is with us.

He is with us when the big paralysis strikes, and he is with us when the stress gets us. He is even with us when we just feel like we should have never changed out of our pajamas that day. In all that we are not alone. It is Jesus himself who has our hand the whole time. Jesus does that in the Spirit of the Living God.

There is no single burden that we face on our own. There is not a single struggle which we bear by ourselves. Even if there is no other person on the earth that knows or cares—Jesus does. Jesus knows. Jesus cares. Jesus has a hold of us. And Jesus also places people around us who cares too—even cares about us. But we will have to open ourselves up to them.

That is the way when we open ourselves up to others...it grows our capacity to be aware of the presence of Jesus there taking us by the hand. Next time you or I think or act as if we are alone in this world we need to open ourselves to the truth that Jesus is with us. We need to open ourselves to the truth that those who are with us are the presence of Christ saying to us: “I have you. I have your by the hand.”

“...he took her by the hand and he lifted her up.”

Jesus took her by the hand and he lifted her up. In her being lifted by Jesus the fever left her. When Jesus arrived she was afflicted with the fever, but when he took her by the hand and lifted her up the text is real clear what happens: “Then the fever left her.”

See this is a healing story. She had the fever. Then she did not. No Tylenol involved. Jesus intervenes. She had the fever. Then she did not. It left her.

We have the fever. Maybe our temperature is okay, but we have the fever. We all have this malady which is in us. It is that deep down stuff that is our fever and we know that it holds us back. We know that it keeps us from being fully well and fully functioning. We know that fever, whatever it is, it is in us and we have wanted Jesus to heal it.

We have wanted Jesus to take those fevers away from us. And we ask in our private selves, “Why haven’t we been healed?” “Why has Jesus not taken this away?” “Why has God not acted swiftly here in me or in the one I love?”

Why does God not heal? Not move? Not act? Not respond?

Ah, but see our vision is short, and our sight is narrow. God has responded. God does and has acted. God is moving. God is and has healed—and that healing is once and for all and it continues into our now.

God has healed us in Jesus Christ. It was in his cross that we see this once and for all healing which covers more than our struggles with this life and more than our deepest pains. That healing in Christ knows the very hurt of the nerves of our bodies and holds that.

It is in that cross of Christ and in the victory of that empty tomb we see the truth. We see the truth that all the way beyond life—even to the point of when we die—God’s answer is this life and this love which cannot be destroyed. That love and life that is God cannot be taken from us or killed or consumed by any fever. It is there.

That love of God reaches all the way out to us and all the way down to us and it holds us and it sustains us so that no matter what fevers come

along they are no match for the love of God. We look to the cross and remember that no matter what happens God will see us through.

That is the healing—the once and for all healing which touches our fevers of this life.

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See when the fever had left her—when the fever had left Simon's mother-in-law that day in the house, she began to serve them.

There was response here. It was response to the healing presence and touch of Jesus. That response was a response of a deacon—it was service oriented. She responded by doing—she served them.

There are some critics who question if she was healed just so that she could wait on them. But the original language here is that she serves them more like a deacon and a disciple. It is a response of love. This is not about being stuck doing something. It is not even about gender roles. It is about a response of love.

She recognizes that Jesus is with her and he has healed her and she wants to respond to that with genuine service and love and compassion.

It is where we are—we have been touched by this love of God. It is with us. It is the healing power in our lives. And we have a choice. We can keep it all to ourselves or we can share it. It is when we respond to the love of God by sharing it that it multiplies.

When we respond to the love of God by sending it forward it grows. When we give our love away to others it becomes more and more and more. It grows.

As we serve up that love to others, and as we step beyond ourselves and allow others in we feel the hand of Christ and it lifts us up. As we lift up others that fever—well now, it becomes fervor rather than a fever.

It is in service that we discover the people we really were created to be.

Simon's mother-in-law was not created to suffer from the fever. She was anointed as a servant of Christ, and when the fever left her she stepped right up and into that calling.

Will we?

Will we step up into the call to serve? Will we share the love of God in Christ Jesus? Will we be conduits of that love to this age? Will we take others by the hand and lift them up into the power of the resurrected Christ in this place and community?

"This is my body broken for you...this is my blood poured out for you."

For us.

And we can do nothing else but share and give this love of God in serving others.

See that one who needs you...and take that one "by the hand." Jesus, has you "by the hand." Take that one who needs you "by the hand."

Amen.