

SUNDAY 5 (B) (2024)

A) A TYPICAL DAY: SERVICE

- a kind of snap-shot of Jesus' ministry
- three key themes: **service, compassion, and prayer:** and all three go together
- it is the Sabbath, Jesus begins by attending the synagogue.
- immediately afterwards, he goes to the house of Simon Peter's mother-in-law, who is ill
- he feels sorry for her, he has compassion for and he wants to do something about it
- and he goes straightaway
- but we can notice some important details:
- he takes her by the hand: so many of Jesus miracles of healing involve touching the person, no matter what their illness may be
- he is not afraid of contagious diseases
- he is not afraid of ritual uncleanness either
- and then he helps her up, he raises her up into health, just as he himself will be raised up from death into his resurrection.
- as soon as she is restored to health, she waits on them, she serves them
- this does not mean that women were always treated as though they were servants
- it is the same word that Jesus himself will use when he says that he has come not to be served but to serve others
- so Peter's mother-in-law is acting like a true disciple, ready to serve others
- Jesus' own disciples did not learn that lesson so easily.

B) COMPASSION

- one work of healing is now followed by many others
- when evening comes it marks the end of the Sabbath
- so people are able to move around and carry burdens
- they are able to bring their sick to Jesus
- we might suppose that at the end of a day, he would be tired and glad of a bit of peace and quiet
- but he shows his compassion for people who were ill, or possessed by devils
- he cures the sick and casts the devils out
- we notice once again how he silences the devils he casts out
- he does not want them to identify him as the Messiah
- ordinary men and women will only come to recognize Jesus for who he really is, when he has died on the Cross and risen from the dead
- the true Messiah is the Suffering Servant of the Lord, foretold by the prophet Isaiah
- in the meantime the Messianic secret must be kept

C) JESUS AT PRAYER

- the final paragraph in the Gospel today shows Jesus getting up very early, seeking to be alone, and spending time in prayer
- he has come to serve others, he shows them compassion, he heals those who are sick, he preaches the Good News
- in all this he is giving of himself, fulfilling the mission that God the Father has entrusted to him
- and so he needs to pray, he needs to recharge the spiritual batteries, he needs to check out that he really is doing what his Father wants him to do
- in all this, he is a model for his disciples, and a model for us too: this is what we must be prepared to do as well
- we notice the attitude of Simon and the other disciples: they are looking for him and encouraging him to respond to the grateful and enthusiastic crowds
- what does he do? he does not fall in with their wishes
- he does not want to be feted and honoured for the wrong reasons
- so he sets off to minister to those people who have not yet heard or seen him
- and he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils

D) CONCLUSION

- and what of us?
- we too are disciples of Jesus
- so we can ask ourselves three questions
- are we prepared to be of service to other people? To put their needs before our own?
- are we prepared to be with people in their pain?
- to listen to them if they want to talk, to be silent with them if they want to be silent, to "suffer-with" them, to have "compassion".
- and finally, can we learn from Jesus at prayer?
- can we take time out each day to be alone with him? To recharge our own spiritual batteries? To make sure that we really are trying to do what the Father wants, and not just what we want?
- what kind of disciples are we?

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