



Rev. Anthony C. Estes
February 7th, 2021
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
Mark 1:29-31

And immediately they went out from the synagogue into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law had come down sick having a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and lifted her, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her. And she ministered to them. Mark 1:29-31

I want to talk to you this morning about What Happens When the Lord Stops by the House.

Growing up in a Pentecostal Church, it was very frequent for healing prayers to be a feature of Sunday morning worship services. And as a child, I believed that God could heal, just as I had seen miracles performed in front of my very eyes at church. One day at my elementary school, I remember standing in the lunchroom and seeing a classmate with a cast on his arm. I told him that I would like to pray for his healing. And I did. Right there at Custer Elementary School. The next time I saw him, the cast was off! Now, I did not know at the time whether or not it was just time for the cast to come off anyway but seeing him without it was enough proof for me.

Prayers for healing isn't child's play anymore, is it? With a public health crisis raging and people dying, we have to admit that the song of suffering and pain in this world has reached a fever pitch. People, all over the world, all over our city, right here within our community of faith, are suffering. To be sure, suffering isn't a word that only describes existential crisis and profound physical agony. Suffering can also describe inconveniences. Annoyances. The wishing to, but can'ts. A lot of us, using that scale, are suffering. Physically, spiritually, emotionally, financially, socially. And that suffering is compounded because as new strains of the virus emerge, many of us will have to, out of necessity, or choose to, out of an abundance of caution, to stay in our homes.

So, in the midst of suffering, as people of faith, we cry out to God for healing. Some have been praying for a while for deliverance from one ill or another. And it can be devastating when those prayers seem unheard, when the suffering seems unnoticed, and when the pain goes unabated.

And our adversary would have us anxious about Isaiah's language that describes place of God as sitting above the circle of the earth and viewing her inhabitants as grasshoppers. That the God who uses the heavens as tent that he can live in might be too far removed from whatever is going on down here. But the Prophet tells us that our way is not hidden from God. That though God is everlasting and the Creator of all things, God does not faint or grow weary. That God gives power to the faint. And strengthens the powerless.

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Let us then reconsider the scene from the Mark's gospel for this morning. God has come into the world in Jesus Christ. He has announced that Kingdom of God has come near. He has freed a man from demonic oppression after teaching in the synagogue.

He stops by the house of Peter and Andrew and his mother-in-law.

He enters into the domain of one who is suffering. She's isolated. She is laid down by a fever.

Can we not imagine what that would be like? To hear life going on around you but unable to participate?

When the Lord stops by the house, Peter tells Jesus about his mother-in-law.

And Jesus, disregards social norms about men and women,
Disregards the then common belief that some fevers were caused by demons.

And he enters further into the world of the suffering. He draws closer to her because she, too heavy-laden by what we can cure with a pill, is unable to draw nigh to Jesus. And if that was unspeakable, he does the unthinkable. He reaches out and touches.

He lifts her up. Where the fever of suffering can no longer hold her down. And in gratitude, she did for Jesus and the other occupants, what the angels did for Jesus after his first showdown with the evil that works in this world. She ministers to them.

What if we are sick? It may not be with a fever, but what if it's something dire? What if we are physically unwell? What if we are laid down with depression? Laid down by racism and sexism? Laid down by waning hopes for the future?

The good news is that God, the high and holy, who makes the sun and the moon and the stars do what it is they do, that God is not so far away that he cannot hear us. That he cannot see our suffering. In fact, In Jesus, he draws nigh to us. He stops by the houses in which we love, and laugh, and hurt.

And he heals.

He touches our hearts.

He lifts us up.

When the Lord stops by the house, he hears the concerns and suffering. If the sickness is sin, Jesus cures it. If the sickness is the fever of unrealized hope, he fulfills it. Jesus heals so that we can be set free for the abundant of life his death and resurrection made available for us.

Do you need a touch from the Lord? Are you almost out of hope? Are you weary and exhausted?
Wait on the Lord. He's stopping by your house this morning.

When the Lord stops by your house, strength will be renewed,
When the Lord stops by your house, you'll mount up with wings like eagles.

Wait on him to come by. Whether it's your first time, and your fiftieth time hoping for healing, be assured that when the Lord Stops By your house, absolutely everything will be alright.