

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobnier, Illinois
Epiphany 5B
February 7, 2021
Mark 1:29-39

No Rest for Jesus

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." (Mark 1:35-37 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

Have you ever had one of those days? You know, where you're constantly on the go with no chance to rest? Even when you lie down at night, there's more to be done that just won't get done today. With such a burden, you may very well feel like Job who said, "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me" (Job 7:1-3).

Jesus had days like that too. But then, He didn't come to earth that *He* might rest. He came that *we* might rest from all our burdens. He came to take our burden, bear our load, and be the One who's always put upon - from sinners wanting more, to His Father laying all our sins on Him, saying: "Here, Son. These sins are YOURS now, not theirs." And so there isn't any rest for Jesus.

Very early in the morning, when other men are sleeping, Jesus leaves the house He's staying in and goes out to a solitary place. No time for sleeping when there's so much to do! He has a world of sins to carry. A world of sinners to make whole again. With so much work to do, Christ gets to praying. As Martin Luther once supposedly said: "I have so much work to do, I couldn't get it finished if I didn't spend at least three hours in prayer each day!"

You know, therefore, the work that rolls our Savior out of bed so early is important. It is pressing. It is your salvation and mine. And everywhere He looks and goes, it's there before Him. Even on the Sabbath. Last week we heard that Jesus went into a synagogue one day of rest, and up shouts some demoniac: "Jesus of Nazareth! The Holy One of God come to destroy us!" And suddenly it's Jesus back to work again, silencing the demons and delivering poor sinners from their grasp. Then in today's Gospel, we hear that the same day He leaves the synagogue and heads to Peter's place, where Simon's mother-in-law is sick with a fever. More work for Jesus. And joyful Sabbath-work it is. Before, it was a demon to cast out. This time it is a fever. What joy! The Lord of Life is present and there isn't any room for illness, pain, or even death.

This Jesus has authority, after all. He comes to put things right again in His creation and to rout the work of Satan. And so, He raises Peter's mother-in-law - takes her by the hand, and that old fever runs away. The One who chases demons is the One Whom even bodily afflictions must obey. Because the demons and afflictions only want to hold us captive with their lies - that God is not in charge of things, and doesn't really love us like a Father, and that when everything is said and done, we die, and that's the end. We die. And that and every other lie Christ came to chase away, and this is how He does it.

And what is truly marvelous is not just that the fever leaves her. What is really marvelous is that the woman rises up to serve, even on the Sabbath! She doesn't wait, as others do, till after sundown when the Sabbath is complete. No, she rises up at once to live as if she's been released from more than just her fever. She rises up within the ministry and work of Jesus; in the Law fulfilled by Him who is the Lord and Master of the Sabbath. If *He* says she can rise and get to serving, even on the day of rest, what's the Law to do? Accuse her? How can it? It would have to accuse Jesus first. It's *His* work that has put her on her feet! *His* work that raised her from her sick bed. So, unless the Law can hang a charge on Jesus, there isn't any Law against this woman anymore.

THAT'S the REALLY big, important work that Jesus came to do! That's the work that Jesus still is doing here today! But that's not the work that people always follow Jesus for. Too often all they want are miracles. Full bellies. Whole bodies. Coffins emptied and tears dried up and lives set free from hell's afflictions. And all of that Christ came to bring, and all of that He promises to bring in full when He returns again in glory. But all of that preached something even greater: a work that sets us free from bondage to the Law; from thinking God is not completely happy with His children. A work that finishes the job for good for us on Calvary so we don't have to go on thinking we must rise and serve to make God happy, or to make ourselves more whole or holy. A work that says: "You're well already, even though you do not look it. You're well because I take you by the hand and raise you to your feet." And just like that! The Law cannot accuse you and your sin can't hold you anymore.

That message is the reason Jesus left Capernaum to preach the Gospel to surrounding villages. His work was even bigger than improving people's lives on earth. It still is. That's why He left this earth and went to heaven: so He could preach the Gospel through the world, right down to you and me. Beginning at the font of Holy Baptism, Jesus took you by the hand and set the devil running. He raised you out of death and freed you from your feverish attempts to make God like you. God likes you. God loves you. God says that no amount of sin in you can change that. And that's what Jesus came to preach. Any leaving Jesus EVER did - from Capernaum or from this earth - was only so that He could carry on the work that really mattered; the work of preaching that your sins are all forgiven, that death and hell and Satan cannot have you any longer.

That is STILL the work that Christ is doing; the work in which He raises you to live and serve and always be at rest. Sure, there is other preaching that could get you on your feet a whole lot faster than the preaching Jesus does. Churches are full of it these days! Pastors preaching how

something must be wrong with you that you aren't being blessed; that whatever's going wrong must be that you don't have the faith that God expects; that if you'd only give a little more, believe a little better, or try a little harder, then God would start to work. And if that kind of preaching didn't bring folks to their feet, if it didn't move them off their pews, or get them all fired up to give and do and change their lives, you wouldn't hear it. You wouldn't see folks flock to churches where amazing things are promised, though nothing so amazing as a baby being baptized, or a sinner hearing from her pastor: "I forgive you all your sins," and surely nothing so amazing as that Jesus really gives us flesh and blood for our forgiveness in the bread and wine! You wouldn't see folks flock to churches such as these if such preaching didn't WORK!

But such preaching only gets poor sinners working, and Jesus came to put us all at rest, even when we rise to serve. "Nothing's held against you now," He says. "My Father drops your sins the way that fever left that woman. How can He now be angry when I've got you by the hand? You're with Me," says Jesus, "and My Father's gonna have to damn Me first before He damns a single one of you." And with these words, He raises us out of our sick beds; comforts us and puts us all at rest. He raises us from ever thinking death can have the final say, that "Someone up there" doesn't like us, that "someone down there" gets his way. Jesus releases us from tossing in our beds like Job and wondering: "How long before I rise? Before I have to face another day - my body clothed with worms and scabs, my skin with boils; my heart with guilt and loneliness and sorrow? My eyes will never see again another happy day" (Job 7:4-7).

No wonder Jesus left Capernaum! He has a lot of work to do! A lot of hearts to put at rest, and this is how He does it. He grabs you with His Water and His Word and says: "There now! The devil cannot have you! And death can't have you, no matter what your fever or your cancer or your grave might say. I have you, and I say even sin can't have you any longer. You are well again. So, come and have some Dinner. Come and eat and drink My Body and My Blood that say you live forever, with all the company of heaven. Everything is finished now," says Jesus, "so come, and be at rest." Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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