

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

Epiphany 5
Mark 1:29-39

7 February 2021
Salem, Bridgeport

“Waiting on Jesus”

“³²That evening, at sunset, 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....”

The sun had already gone down by the time word got out and people begin bringing those in need to Jesus. We don't know how long he ministered to the crowds, but it couldn't have been more than a few hours because eventually he went to sleep since the text says he got up while it was still dark.

The text says they brought ALL who were sick or possessed by demons.

And it also says he cured MANY and cast out demons from MANY.

MANY. Not ALL.

It makes me wonder about those who were still in line

when Jesus decided to call it quits for the night and go to bed.

Of course they went searching for him the next morning, fully expecting him to continue his work there, but he had been praying and he felt the call to move on.

I am sure there have been times in your life when you have felt like those people Jesus left standing in line, times when your prayers have seemed to go unanswered, times when your needs have gone unmet, times when it seems as if God has shut the door and gone to bed, or skipped town.

I'm sure you've felt like that because it's part of the human condition.

There are certainly times when I feel like that.

And then I wonder what's wrong with me that I should still doubt?

I feel terribly guilty, because I know what my faith teaches me about God's promises and God's faithfulness.

I feel terribly guilty, because I know that God has answered my prayers in the past.

I feel terribly guilty, because I know others who have been through worse things than I and have remained faithful.

I feel something's wrong with me.

I feel I should know better than that.

I feel I should be better than that.

But then I remember all of the people in the Bible who felt just as lost and alone, just as doubting and despairing, just as helpless and hopeless as I.

I remember Elijah who wandered out alone into the desert, curled up under a tree, and told God, “I can't do this anymore! Please just take my life.”

Job, too, pleaded with God to take his life.

Jeremiah cursed the day he was born.

In the Psalms David poured out his feelings of fear and loneliness and grief and pain.

Even Jesus on the cross cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

So what do we do when we are in that place of doubt and despair, that place of loss and loneliness, that place of panic and pain?

We remember that we're not at the end of the story.
God eventually sent an angel to minister to Elijah.
God eventually restored the fortunes of Job.
God eventually turned all of David's laments into songs of praise.
And God eventually raised Jesus from death to life.

Think about it this way:
In this life, we know that the weather outside changes.
Eventually droughts come to an end,
 storms pass,
 floods recede.
And the same is true for the weather inside our souls.
There are times when we will feel lost and alone,
 helpless and hopeless,
 abandoned and afraid.

When we remember we're not at the end of the story,
 that can give us the hope we need to keep moving forward.
Just as when we drive through the darkness our headlights only show us the next 200 feet,
 as we keep moving forward, the light moves forward with us,
 and eventually our view will change.
If we stop because we don't like the current view, the view will never change.
So we remember we're not at the end of the story and we keep moving forward.

The fact is we don't know what happened to those who were left in line that night,
 waiting for Jesus.
If they understood this wasn't the end of the story and they kept moving forward
 then I believe they found what they sought.
Maybe they followed him to the next town and were healed there.
Maybe they waited until he returned to Capernaum and were healed then.
Or maybe they were healed later by Jesus' disciples.

If we give up, if we think the story has reached its end, if we stop moving forward,
 we'll miss out on the best of the rest that is yet to come.

And so we hold on.
We hold on to the stories in scripture.
We hold on to the stories of our own lives.
We hold on to the stories of others.

And through all of those stories we remember the power, the love, and the faithfulness of God.

To that God be honor and praise and glory and thanks now and forever. **Amen**