

Call to Worship: Psalm 147: 1-4

Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,

how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

The Lord builds up Jerusalem;

he gathers the exiles of Israel.

He heals the broken-hearted

and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars

and calls them each by name.

The Psalmist tells us that remembering and reciting God's blessings is a cause of praise.

Read, listen to, or sing : Tell out my soul <https://youtu.be/eqwoqRo9N6E>

Let us pray:

We worship you, eternal God,

creator of the universe, source of all being, sustainer of all life.

We stand amazed in your presence,

whose glory and power are beyond our imagining.

The blazing light of your purity and holiness

reveals to us how tarnished and imperfect our own lives are;

yet in Jesus Christ you have shown your unbounded love for us.

We join together in the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples:

Our Father in heaven,

Holy is your name.

Your kingdom come,

your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,

and forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who have sinned against us.

Keep us from times of trial and deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory

for ever and ever! Amen

Read: Isaiah 40: 21-31

Read, listen to, or sing : Forth in thy name O Lord I go https://youtu.be/Y3K1QVyE_QA

Read: Mark 1: 29-39

This reading is part of Mark's account of a day in the life of Jesus' early ministry. It follows on from his teaching in the synagogue where he was accosted by a man overcome by an evil spirit.

Read, listen to, or sing : At even when the sun was set <https://youtu.be/no07HDrIwNQ>

The work of the church

My Dad was a policeman in London, and they all used to refer to their work as "The Job". It was such a common phrase that even their magazine had the same title.

The same could be said about the work of the church – surely everyone (especially those outside) knows what we should be doing.

Let's look again at the three sections of our reading from Mark and see what meaning they had for their own time and maybe see if there are insights for today.

The reading begins "as soon as they left the synagogue..." The Jewish custom for the main Sabbath meal was immediately after the service at around 12 noon. Jesus might well have expected to want to rest after the exertions and experiences at the synagogue. Indeed, throughout the reading we see that Jesus has no time or space to call his own.

It might also have been expected (in those days) we never know her name!) would have just been kept out of the way and Jesus not 'bothered' with her minor illness. After all there were other women in the household to attend on the party. However, despite the furore at the synagogue, John, James, Simon, and Andrew obviously felt amazingly comfortable talking to Jesus, they naturally spoke to him of their everyday concern.

Knowing the need, Jesus went and helped. In private, without onlookers (as there had been at the synagogue) he healed a single person so that she could resume her household role. No role, or place or person is too low for God to work. We may feel that we are 'only; a housewife, retired, too old, too poor, too tired to make a difference. We may wish that we could be different. Peter's mother-in-law did not become a different person, she did not give up her ordinariness – she used it to show her thanks, by doing what she knew, household chores to the glory of God.

Jesus too did everything to show God's glory not his own. He did not heal in the style of others of his day – with razzamatazz, incantations, and spells, waving of arms and charms. He simply held her hand and helped her up with the authority of God. We must also take care not to get caught up with the quazi-religiousity that abounds today. Crystals, astrology, and fortune tellers surround us as they did in Jesus earthly days. They are distractions from the job in hand – people cannot heal themselves, only God can provide a complete recovery. Peter's mother-in-law was not only cured of her fever, but she was also given

back her strength. Normally a recovery from fever would leave the patient weak and listless. With God's cure she was able to get up immediately.

So, to the second part of the account in Mark. Even when it is dark Jesus gets no rest. The whole town gathered at the door. It seems that although Jesus healed on the Sabbath the townspeople were afraid of the law which forbade them from doing any work until 3 stars showed that the Sabbath was ended. Work included walking anywhere further than the synagogue or helping the sick along. So, they waited until Sabbath was ended to flock to Jesus. This may help us to realise that often we are the ones who play safe, not God. Jesus did God's work whenever and wherever it was needed, not only when it was convenient.

Why did they come to see Jesus? Was it because here was someone who did something instead of talking about it? Or did they not believe when others told them what had happened and so came to gawp at the latest sensation. The sick and disabled may well have come to him to deal with their personal crises. We are all aware of the sort of prayers that start "Dear God if you will... then I will..." It seems a human y=thing to pray when you want help rather than thank God for his goodness. Yet these crowds were also healed and sent home. Jesus did not ask for a contract of a contribution before he helped them.

The last section from our gospel reading tells us that very early, while it was still dark, Jesus went out to pray. Yet even there he was found by the disciples. Sometimes it seems that everyone wants a piece of us – work, family, church, worries, problems. I guess in lockdown some of us are changing our minds about the delights of a desert island!

How often have we felt that there is not enough time for us to fit in the important things? Jesus shows us the right way – do the important things first! Pray – talk and listen to God.

Jesus is praying the very day after worship and teaching in the synagogue – once a week is not enough.

A surprising thing about this section is Jesus' reply to the disciples when they tell him that everyone is looking for him. He said, "Let's go somewhere else"!

If everyone were beating a path to the door of our church looking for Jesus – wouldn't we be pleased! But Jesus shows us that we cannot rest on our laurels or confine God to a place. His work (and ours) is to go where people are, not expect them to come to us.

So, three things. Prayer – Action – Sharing.

Talk to Jesus about everyday concerns. You don't have to do extraordinary things, brighten the corner where you are. Share what knowing Jesus has done for you, spread the good news!

Brighten the corner <https://youtu.be/0gb4wTEmtGU> or <https://youtu.be/DRMK6ub65AA>

Let us pray :

As the sick , the disabled, the outcast leper and the mentally disturbed were brought to Christ for healing, so we bring before the Lord in prayer the disease and suffering of our world and ask for his healing and help.

We pray for diseased countries...

We pray for sick societies...

We pray for suffering people...

We pray for those who are ill...

We pray for disabled people...

We pray for those distresses in mind...

Lord, in your mercy – hear our prayer. Amen

Lean on me <https://youtu.be/Jrlhn1H1EWw>