**Text**: Mark 1:29-30

**The Bethel Pulpit**

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I can’t help but think that God has a sense of humor.  The calendar was set weeks ago that I would preach this weekend.  If not funny, it’s at least ironic that on the Sunday that I myself in need of healing the text from Mark is about healing.  I want my own little miracle.  I want Jesus to reach out take my cradle my hand in his and lift me up off this scooter.  Of course, I know with time this will all heal up, and I will be able to walk on two feet and drive my car again and not be dependent on others to do so much for me.  But I am still having trouble adjusting to this obstacle.

My experience isn’t unique.  Most of us have been in similar places where we desperately wanted to Jesus to answer our prayers to heal out dear friend, our husband or wife, or our children from cancer, depression, a broken relationship.  But if often feels as if these prayers have escaped God’s hearing.  The memories of our fathers and mothers are not restored.  The stoke that stole away the vitality of our husbands are not reversed.  Headaches continue to rob us of the ability to feel real joy and fully embrace life.  The search for a new job keeps running into dead-end after dead-end. The remaining questions we often have is why? Why didn’t Jesus heal what ails me?  He did it for others with a simple touch.  What about my prayers?  Where’s my miracle Jesus?

The text says, “he cured many,” not all.  That’s a harsh reality one that only Jesus understood even today.  We must look more deeply into the message, and into the person Jesus touches first.  There were a whole lot of rules at the time story took place, many of them unwritten, but nonetheless, people were expected to follow.  Simon’s mother-in-law was a forgotten member of society.  She should have been living with her own son, and if that wasn’t possible, she should have joined the people who lived on the street.  We aren’t told her name which underscores her lack of power and personal agency; her nothingness status in the eyes of those around her.

You see Jesus gave her something she had never been allowed to possess with his warmth of heart and his touch.  His touch delivered her from the nothingness she was forced to accept.  He made her new. He lifted her to the same level as the angels who will keep Jesus during his 40 days in the wilderness.  Why an angel? Because he lifted her out of her nameless nothingness to be one who ministers to Jesus himself, and if she can do that well, she can do anything He calls her to do.  You could say she is the fifth disciple Jesus calls. She is healed so that she can walk with Jesus and answer his call to discipleship, regardless of what others might think.  Jesus’ healing brings justice for Simon’s mother-in-law.

Jesus is bringing healing and justice to the 200 plus young women of the US women’s gymnastics team who have been sexually abused by not only their team physician but by those who were unwilling to listen to them and do the right thing for some 30 plus years.  And regardless of what faith they claim, Jesus is using their voices to get the word out, so that maybe in the future when a 15-year-old girl tells a similar revolting story of being made a sex toy for some repulsive individual someone, just one somebody, will grasp that still developing young hand and walk with her working to obtain the justice she needs.  They will hear her small voice and make sure others hear it too.  They will lift her up and say this was wrong.

For myself, the bones will heal, but there has been a different Jesus type of healing going on as well.  I pride myself in being fiercely independent.  These last few weeks I am pretty sure Jesus is trying to challenge my independent streak.  It’s been a struggle for me to ask for help.  The outpouring of offers to help has been well overwhelming for me on several levels.  It’s like Jesus is telling me if you are going to walk with me, if you are going to really walk with me, you are going to have to learn how to walk not by yourself tagging along pulling at my sleeve.  No, you Martha are going to have to walk with me and not depend on yourself; you must depend on me, on the abundance of grace I will give you.  Oh, and Martha, there’s one other essential piece to walking with me; you must walk with others; you must rely on the people around you. Put away your pride in being independent; when you follow me, there is no such thing as going it alone.

To have a relationship with Jesus is to have a relationship with others. What healing needs to happen here at Bethel? We all have wounded spots in our lives. Time with you has told me there is still some grieving that needs to be done. People who were deeply loved either died or are no longer attending here. Pastors have come and gone in rapid succession leaving before there was much of a chance to get to really know them. The once growing Latino Community declined over the years to the point Bethel could no longer continue with it. Whenever people come and go our life together change happens whether we are aware of it or not; and grief is left behind. Engaging in the work of grieving will be healing, and it will free you to be the disciple Jesus calls you to be. We are created to be interdependent, but we live in a world that tells us to think only about yourself. And Jesus says to us, “Oh no you don’t; to walk with me, really walk with me, you must link arms with your neighbors.”

The new organizational structure designed by the Transition Task Force will strengthen Bethel as a community because more voices will be at the table. It gives us a pattern to link arms with each other. At the same time, we must keep searching for ways to bring others into our conversation. When those new voices are given an opportunity to speak and be fully heard whether we agree with them or not Jesus touches us, and healing happens.

Much of what I have witnessed in the world around me doesn’t provide us with a great example of how to be fully inclusive creating an environment where true dialogue and discourse can occur. Just listen to the conversations in Washington D.C. and you will see what I mean. In true discourse, you may not all agree; you may not get your way, but you won’t get run over either. Without name calling, without fear of one or more members around the talk tossing out insults, open discussions can move forward. When we are healed and free, we can lock arms even when we strongly disagree, making Bethel a stronger more vibrant community. Jesus is linked with us and pulling us into this future. Jesus’ healing often isn’t what we want it to be. I didn’t get the miracle I wanted; I got something better. Truthfully, He is still dragging me into it. His healing is better than anything we can hope for. His healing makes us better able to be his disciple, to walk with him. Jesus came to live among us. He came to serve and not be served. Any healing he provides us will lead us into his way of serving others and link us together as the one people of God.