



Church at Home
Sunday 7th February 2021
The Fifth Sunday After The Epiphany

I have no right to boast just because I preach the gospel.
After all, I am under orders to do so.
And how terrible it would be for me if I did not preach the gospel!

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Welcome.

Welcome to our service to God on the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“So, when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:1-4

In just a few sentences, Jesus has exposed one of the biggest idols I/We face; being approved of and appreciated by others. Every day I read news stories glorifying the generous, highlighting the honourable, celebrating celebrity status. But the way of Jesus is actively set against popularity culture. He calls me/us to practice the very opposite of what the human heart often desires. I am called to serve in secret, for the glory of God, alone.

The Collect:

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Bible readings for Sunday:

Isaiah 40:21-31. The proclamation of what seems impossible to believe is held together with the truth of what is impossible to deny.

1 Corinthians 9:16-23. Paul illustrates these theological values in his life.

Mark 1:29-39. Jesus heals us so that we might engage the faith with others.

Psalms 147:1-12, 21c. Praising God is work that is its own wages.

Before we sing, read or pray

As I enter a time to sing, read and pray; I pause to be still; to breath slowly; to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God. (Lectio 365 – Pete Greig)

Suggested hymns:

[The Lord of the Dance](#)

[God of Love and God of Power](#)

[O for a Thousand Tongues](#)
[Dear Lord and Father of mankind](#)
[What a Friend we have in Jesus](#)
[Give Thanks](#)
[O Eagles Wings \(Hillsong\)](#)

First thoughts of 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Are we boastful about ourselves or about the gospel? Who comes first, ourselves or the gospel?

What motivates us to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ? What shapes our proclamation?

For Paul, the motivating force of his proclamation is a profound sense of call. For Paul, God's call to him is shaped by a pair of powerful and interlaced forces: The God who called him and the people who would hear the good news. That is, for Paul, God and the people to whom God has sent him are tied together.

For Paul, the proclamation of the good news ought not only be rooted in a united community but also be "free of charge." That is, the gospel he proclaims does not come with strings attached, with obligations to care for or cater to his needs.

Instead, the reverse is true. Paul relinquishes his "rights in the gospel" (verse 18) for the sake of those he hopes to reach for the sake of the good news.

Paul is preaching for the good of God and not the good of Paul! When we talk our Christian faith or life; do we talk about ourselves and explain how good we are or do we talk about the goodness of our Lord and heavenly father.

Instead, like Paul, exhort your efforts to proclaim the good news of Jesus, to share with others a taste of the kingdom of God right here and now. And, like Paul, remind others that the radical path of faith is not easy but demands us to continue to persevere, to endure, to push past our weariness as we approach the finish line. Like Paul, remind yourself and others that the reward that awaits us is not a medal that is displayed one day and then sold on eBay the next. Our reward is eternal and intangible yet vividly present now.

For our prayers, let us remember:

- The families and businesses who are under increasing pressure as this lockdown continues
- Our leaders as they work out how best to balance concerns over the still high infection rate and expectations surrounding the rollout of the vaccine.
- For those we know who are sick, at home or in hospital, and those whose lives have been badly affected during this crisis.
- For all health care professionals, many of whom are under severe pressures at work
- For world leaders as they work out how best to support developing countries who also face this pandemic
- For those we know who are mourning the loss of family and friends.

Add any particular people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**.

We have had our service to God; now give your service for God.

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Reflection on the Gospel and activities.

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Activities.

1. A talk by Val Harris [Listen - To the Reading and the Talk.](#)
2. [An illustrated Reading of the Gospel.](#)
3. [Illustrated Readings with words.](#)
4. [60-Second Sermon](#)

Some thoughts on today's scripture

- Many aspects of the life of Jesus come together in this reading. After the morning drama in the synagogue, Jesus went to the home of Simon and Andrew. The restrictions of Sabbath observance necessitated their having a quiet day. But Simon's mother-in-law was ill, and Jesus was moved to cure her. He always put compassion before the law.
- The Sabbath ended at sundown and this allowed "the whole city" to come with their sick and possessed. They encamped at the door until Jesus had exercised his healing power. How late was it when all that was over? Yet in the morning, "while it was still very dark", Jesus slipped out of the house, found a deserted place, and gave himself to prayer. Why did Jesus feel the need to pray? Are you surprised?
- A search party was sent to look for Jesus. When they found him a curious conversation ensued which involved an apostolic choice: to return to Capernaum as the inhabitants wanted, or to move on to other towns? Jesus had already (in prayer?) decided on the latter option. What would you have advised?
- In prayer, perhaps you might speak to Jesus about your shared experience of this lack of human acceptance and appreciation. Let him tell you how much he appreciates you as a companion and as one who shares his work. Notice and express how much you resist as well as relish what he says to you.



- Who do you take your troubles to? Jesus heard Simon's prayer for his sick mother-in-law and the fever left her. There is no trouble he will not face with us and for us. Put your trust in him.
- Lord Jesus, you became human for us! You brought joy to a family at Cana. You brought healing and hope to Simon Peter's mother-in-law, and to the paralysed and the blind. You gave bread to the hungry. You gave us your life, your body, your spirit, your mother – everything. Thank you!
- Lord, I thank you for my health, not something to luxuriate in, but the means by which I can serve others.



ALL OF THESE SICK PEOPLE IN THE WORLD AND JESUS JUST ABANDONS THEM TO GO PREACH SOMEWHERE ELSE? HE NEEDS TO BE FIXING PEOPLE!



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JESUS ISN'T LEAVING— HE'S BRING THE KINGDOM. HE'S NOT ABANDONING US— HE'S LEADING US!



* SHOUT OUT TO JMA!

SO... DO YOU THINK HE'D BE INTERESTED IN A COUPLE OF SIDE JOBS?



MARK 1:29-39

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