

MONDAY 28 March 2022 "Personalized Jesus"

Mark 1:30-42

Good Monday morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

As we begin a new week together, I have a question for all of us... *As we watch the world news do you see over and over the plight of desperate people who seem to be forgotten, overlooked, disregarded as unimportant?* No matter where you live, you probably have homeless people and poor people in your town. When you look closely, does it seem they feel insignificant in our world? *Do you suppose many of these people wonder if God cares about them or their plight in life?*

As we continue our journey toward Easter with Jesus and four men, He has invited to join Him on this journey, Jesus promised them that He'd help them become **"fishers of men"**. Even though Andrew, Peter, James, and John were professional fishermen by trade, I don't think they really had any idea what Jesus meant by that. Yesterday we watched in the Synagogue in Capernaum, during a normal Shabbat service, while Jesus was reading and teaching the Scriptures, a demon possessed man confronted Jesus! Can you imagine that? Jesus quieted the man, bound, and expelled the demons, delivering the man from living in bondage to the domination of multiple demons, and Jesus did it with only a few words. *The men with Jesus were beginning to understand His power in delivering people from the dark kingdom of evil.*

Let's rejoin Mark's account today as we watch Jesus proving to His disciples in training that *EVERY person matters to God, EVERY person, no matter their condition.* Mark tells us that after that Synagogue service, Peter invited Jesus and his friends to his home, expecting a meal would be ready, but his mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. (Mark 1:30) When Jesus found out, He gently raised her up, healing her from her fever. After they all had a meal together a crowd gathered that evening all looking for Jesus' help. Mark describes it this way: ***"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door..."*** (Mark 1:32) Because it was the Sabbath these good Jews waited until after sunset because each new day began at sunset, and thus they'd be permitted to carry the ill and those needing help. They came to the house where Jesus was having a meal because they had heard about the kind, but authoritative way Jesus had delivered the man from demons, earlier that day in the Synagogue.

The four disciples watched Jesus carefully. What would He do? How would He respond to this intrusion into His 'after hours' life? *Have you considered that for Jesus, being God is a full time, 24/7 role with no time for naps or vacation or any 'time off'? Have you considered what that must be like with nearly 8 billion of us very needy human beings and all that is happening around the world at this very moment?* For these four fishermen, let's be honest... as they did their work, fishing, it was usually far away from noisy, needy people.

But here, Jesus was showing them that needy people are the business of those who are 'fishers of men'! Mark describes what happened next with these words: **"Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons."** (Mark 1:34) By his choice of words, Mark suggests Jesus did His healing work one person at a time. It shouldn't be difficult for us to stand with the four disciple apprentices watching as Jesus goes from person to person. He leans down and apparently asks them their name with a smile and then asks what their need is. Then with a look toward heaven and a prayer, their need is met by Jesus. Healing takes place... right there in front of everyone, one individual sick or demon possessed person at a time!

Finally, late into the night, the crowd had all gone home, the courtyard was empty and the house quiet. Jesus and His four students sat looking at one another and talking about what had happened. While I don't know who, I'm sure someone must have said, **"Jesus, I notice You did not turn anyone away nor did You turn away from anyone. Everyone seemed important to You and each person left not only healed of their illness but greatly encouraged in their heart. They all left believing God really cares about them and loves them and understands their unique situation!"** Jesus would have smiled... they were learning!! Fishers of fish sometimes catch fish in a big net. *Fishers of men draw people to God one person at a time, by helping them experience God's touch, right where God knows they need His help!*

I have no doubt they all slept well that night, especially Jesus. Mark tells us Peter must have been the first to awaken in the morning, but as he looked around, he was troubled to see Jesus was not there! He went searching and after a while, Peter found Jesus in the faint, early morning, dim light. He was alone, praying in a solitary place. While Peter was searching for Jesus, he had noticed people were coming to the house looking for Jesus. *It wasn't even daylight yet and people were searching for Jesus!!* When Peter found Him, he said **"Jesus, everyone is looking for you."** Fully expecting Jesus would hurry quickly back to the needy people, Peter was stunned when Jesus looked calmly at Peter and after saying good morning, Jesus said **"Let's go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."** (Mark 1:38)

It's important we understand what was happening here. Jesus frequently prioritized getting away from the crowds, the noise, the demands for His attention... to spend quiet time with God His Father. Why? *Jesus wanted to be sure everything He said and did was exactly what the Father wanted for Him that day, that moment.* There was always more need than Jesus had time for, so Jesus needed to learn to prioritize His time to focus on what God the Father knew was most important at that moment. On that morning, Jesus knew word would spread and there would be more people with more need. Should He simply charge into His day meeting the expectations of needy people? Jesus needed to teach His apprentices that would be a mistake. It might have been a good use of the day... but was it the best use according to God His Father?

It was vital Jesus teach these men to learn how to discern and follow God's leading, everyday! These were Jewish guys, so they knew well the Old Testament stories of Moses and the people following God's cloud in the sky by day or the pillar of fire by night. *Now they'd need to learn to follow the Holy Spirit leading them.*

Peter needed to learn the lesson Jesus was living... and we do too! There will always be need, always opportunity, but *the very best use of time, talent and resources is knowing and following God's guidance to join God in accomplishing God's purposes where you are living, every day.* On that morning, even though more people were gathering, the greater need was down the road, at least from God's perspective.

It's possible the brief encounter Jesus had with a Leper, as described by Mark in Mark 1:40-42, may have happened as Jesus was heading down that road, away from Capernaum, on to the next village. Lepers were required to stay outside the towns, away from people, in fact they carried a bell to warn people if they accidentally came too close. Leprosy was like living death... alone, rejected from society and even family, as their flesh disintegrated slowly before their eyes. But Mark tells us **"A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged Jesus on his knees, 'If you are willing you can make me clean.' Filled with compassion Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man! 'I am willing, Be clean!' Jesus said. Immediately the leprosy left the man and he was cured."**

Of course, the leper should not have approached Jesus... but he was desperate. And of course, Jesus should not have touched the leper, but Jesus was desperate too! The man was desperate to be healed of a highly contagious, terminal disease. Jesus was desperate that people, especially the disciples He was training, see and experience the miraculous power and understand that the personal touch of Jesus is available and intended for everyone, one person at a time. Perhaps more important was that Jesus was not afraid, not restrained by any of the normal attitudes, prejudices, bigotry, or other social curses that too often keep people in great need from finding the help they desperately need. So, let's pause right here and watch as Jesus heals a leper. May I ask... how desperate are you my friend, for a fresh, powerful touch from Jesus? How much do you think Jesus cares about you and your need for His touch? Is there anyone who you think is beyond the touch of God?

Sit now in a quiet, peaceful place and let this reflective song penetrate your heart with God's love:

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