

Mark 1:29-39

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sundown, 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; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us

go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”

³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

“Everyone is searching for you.” I think this phrase is powerful and important! Think about how lost and messed up our world is today. So many people using the word of God to justify actions that are not even close to what Jesus would do or how Jesus would act. People searching for happiness in all kinds of places - in political leaders, in drugs or alcohol, down internet rabbit holes, gambling and addictions of all kinds. People of all ages feeling so desperate that the only way they can fathom getting out of their pain is by suicide. Jesus - Everyone is searching for you - they just might not know it.

In a blog called “Unfolding Faith”, people write in their faith stories. It is very interesting to see all of the different ways that people have come to Jesus and how it has changed their lives. I just want to share two, even though the blog is filled with so many inspirational stories.

The first story is about a woman named Theresa, who grew up in a very dysfunctional family that attended church on a regular basis. And, although she grew up in the church, she never felt close to God. As one thing after another happened in her family while she was growing up, it all led to her being diagnosed as clinically depressed in high school. She had many thoughts of suicide, began cutting herself and stopped eating all except what was critical in order to live. When she went to college, she met a friend named Christy. Theresa writes, “As it turned out, my friend Christy suffered from depression and anxiety,

and she was a pastor's daughter. I was surprised because I had decided that depression and God were incompatible. Thankfully, my friends cared enough to explain that depression isn't a spiritual issue and that God really did love me. God could still use me because he loves to use cracked clay jars, and we are all cracked in some way. Christy was on medication, and it helped her. She helped me understand that it's okay to be a Christian and suffer from depression. It isn't a problem that God can't overcome. I began attending church regularly again, and my relationship with God grew. After college, I moved back home and decided to join the leadership of my church's high school youth group. I wanted to help kids who suffered from depression and needed someone who understood them. I wanted to use my experience for God's glory, and I still have good relationships with several of those kids. I have been through many hopeless places, but God was always with me. And I thank God that even

someone who went through a period of severe doubt could be used by him to encourage and help others.”

Jesus - Everyone is searching for you!

Another story is from Andrew, a young man who also grew up going to church, but never felt close to God. He had, from all outside appearances, a perfect life. A good family, good looks, athletic, popular, smart. But, he struggled. Andrew says, “Amid what I imagine was a life that many kids would dream of, my struggles began. I look back, and think that, perhaps, if I had known God was to thank for all that I was blessed with, would my life have been different? In addition to my success in football and the classroom, I fell in love for the first time. I really felt like I had it all. But, in reality I was losing touch with

who I was and letting destructive things penetrate my life. I was drawn to the party scene. I felt I had an image to uphold: I was a popular kid, and the popular kids go to parties. I drank beer and tried recreational drugs. I was lost. I didn't know who I really was. I was aware I had problems, but my life was so empty. I had nobody to pray to. No God to believe in that could get me through this. I said I was fine and made excuses for my challenges, saying I was just having fun. But I was spiraling further. God was not even a thought anymore.” After multiple DUI's, losing his scholarship and getting arrested for fighting, Andrew states, “I knew I needed help, and I felt that help calling loudly from God. With no other place to turn, I went to church. My mom was attending regularly, and finally, after asking so many times before, I said yes to going with her. This is where life began to change. This church was such a welcome place. The people were like me—they dressed like me and cared about the same things

I did. I began attending church on a regular basis. Through prayer and Scripture, I began to let God in. I started to open my heart and accepted Jesus. I have God now, and I have my faith. I have prayer and a relationship with Christ and have an ever-growing network of people in my life that will help me achieve. Now I believe that when success is achieved, I will be confident in moving forward. There is no doubt I will stumble along the way. But, as this new season in my life takes shape, I am not afraid. I embrace these challenges and am excited to see what the future holds now that my footing is firm. I cannot say that my life has totally changed, but I now have a focus. A guiding light. An inner peace. I know that I cannot do this life on my own. Without prayer, the center of my life will begin to deviate again. I'll lose myself. I've been put here on this earth by God, and I still am working to discover my purpose.”

Jesus - Everyone is searching for you!

There are people like Theresa and Andrew all around us. Young people such as these two, middle aged people who are lost and struggling, elderly people who feel alone and worthless. They are all looking for Jesus.

So, how do we help others find Him? Just as Theresa's friend Christy listened and shared her story, she also invited Theresa to church. Just as Andrew's Mom never gave up on her son, she continued to invite Andrew to church with her. As we discussed in the sermon a couple of week's ago, we are the hands and feet of Jesus. We are expected to help those who need help. And, just as we talked about in last week's sermon, Jesus should have full authority in our lives. Because without Jesus as our leader, we are lost. We become like Theresa or Andrew, going through life like a trainwreck, never truly happy.

Even some of us, as we sit here today, may still be looking for Jesus. Maybe the relationship you have had with Him is strained right now because your faith got tested. Maybe you are struggling with an illness or depression and just can't see your way back to happiness. It is then that we all must rely on the words given to us in Joshua 1:9: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." And, we need to remember that the hands and feet of Jesus are surrounding you - lean on them if you need to.

Simon and his companions hunted for Jesus in today's gospel. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

“That is what I came out to do”. To evangelize to others about the good news and promises of God. It is incredibly hard to invite someone to church. It is even harder to not judge when someone does something you don’t agree with. But, it is our responsibility, as Christians, to do both. We are called to listen. We are called to love. We are called to act. So, if being the Christians that we are meant to be, as described in our baptismal covenants, means to get out there and be uncomfortable, then so be it. Our baptismal covenants state that we are to: “... live among God’s faithful people; hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper; proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; serve all people following the example of Jesus; and strive for justice and peace in all the earth.”

Jesus - Everyone is searching for you! But, we are willing to help them find You! Let us pray:

“Heavenly Father, We would be lost without you. Jesus brings to us the authority we need in our lives - someone who will listen to us, comfort us and be there for us when we are in need. And, we know in our hearts that it is our responsibility to help others find this comfort as well. Give us the courage we need to share the good news. Give us the words to say. Give us the ears to listen. Just as someone believed in us enough to invite us to church, we need to believe in others. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.