

The Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany of Our Lord
(2021)
Mark 1

Mark 1:29–39

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

In the Name of Jesus.

Did Christ, the Lord, ignore ‘opportunity knocking?’
‘Well, good news, Jesus! Just EVERYONE is looking for You! Time to go BACK—BACKWARDS—SLOWWWWW....DOWNN.... and reap the rewards and invent the internet quickly and get followers you can tweet and face and tok and tik and chat and snap and influence and....’

‘I must keep moving. I came out of THAT house, out of THAT town; let US go!’

Though the Lord forbids His disciples to cast their pearls before swine, every now and then your poor pastor finds one dropped at his own feet. The Last Day will ring with the child’s observation by a dear sister now fallen asleep: ‘Pastor! The Lord sure seems to be FULL of HIMSELF!’ We were reading Isaiah at the time. The prophet never grows weary or faint trumpeting the Lord’s message: ‘I do what I do with you, my people Israel, for MY sake, NOT for YOUR sake! I will do with you what I do to glorify MY Name, NOT yours!’

Every child yearns to be—as my wife and savior has taught this dog—‘CATCH children—being GOOD, now and then. Do not only catch them being bad.’

If we have heard the Gospel, my dear ones, nothing is more fitting for us that to go and make the day GOOD—JUST...GOOD---because of CHRIST! WITH....OUTT.....ANY....REFERENCE....TO the one we’re making the day good FOR....!

A child, full of life, can spoil and go terribly wrong, when he CANNOT do any wrong. Then all that's left is to elect him to some public office and let the tyranny begin! No: catch the child being good and reinforce THE GOOD! Yet do NOT ruin the child and his world and his prospects by ignoring the beee-yoo-tee-full reality that he is still a child. In a word, 'Repent! And believe the Good News!'

Children of God, GOOD for Y'ALL! You do well to confess the Blessed Holy Trinity as your God, your Creator, your Redeemer, your New Spirit. Let me also not MISS catching you—reveling in the Lord's Supper, the Lord's saving Baptism, the Lord's life-giving word of Absolution! And as the Lord rose early the day after the Sabbath—then Simon and the others did—then the women who saw Him buried; they rose early; same day of the week, same 'very early;' bless the record of their GOOD!

But the women rose 'very early,' and were 'saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?!"' But looking up,

they saw that the stone HAD been rolled back.
And—writes Saint Mark—‘and it was a big one!’

The young man in Jesus’ former tomb preached them repentance—but how gentle that repentance IS when the it begins and end with HIM, NOT with THEM, with US!

‘Do not be alarmed!’ (That’s HIM! Jesus!)

YOU seek—(that’s THEM)—you seek JESUS OF NAZARETH! (That’s HIM)

Then it’s all HIM; all of it!

HE WAS CRUCIFIED

HE has risen

HE is not here

See the place where they laid HIM

Dear Norma appears before me right now with that smirk and that looking over her glasses and that sassy, faithful, redeemed sinner boldness and confidence: ‘Kinda FULL of ourselves nice and early in the morning, aren’t WE, Jesus?!’

YES!

WHY?! NOT...FOR...HIM! But for the Gospel! Your GOD is FULL OF HIMSELF! And THAT is ALL...GOOD...FOR...YOU! For me! For THIS:

‘Here’s a walk that does not tire a man. Here’s a run that will not weary. Here is a NEW strength—that....IS...NOT....not....nott.....what anyone calls strong:’

The lad continued very early that morning: ‘So, now’—how gentle!—‘Go on now. The disciples’—

SORRY!—‘HIS disciples!---(BIG SMILE, EVERYONE! There’s no doubt the Lord will not leave Norma’s voice silenced!)

‘Tell HIS disciples—AND...PETER....’

And....Peter...

If you cannot sleep, just recite, ‘And Peter...and Peter...and Peter...’

HIS disciples—and, also, BESIDES His own, BESIDES His disciples—and NO MATTER how MUCH old SIMON has been looking out for number one: SIMON!

NEW NAME! Peter! New day! ‘Has is going before you disciples—and YOU TOO, Peter!—to Galilee. THERE, you will see HIM! THAT is what was told to you...BY...HIM!’

My dear ones, the MORE THE Holy Spirit pours out

HIM, the happier it is for YOU, for ME, for Simon Peter, for His disciples, for all Creation!

I caught y'all being good today: confessing your sins and rejoicing in HIS Baptism and your own, looking up to be fed, and then REALLY fed!

Good for you! Nothing good-er!

Unless you spoil. Unless MY message goes sour.

Simon's mother-in-law—just how I READ it!—it seems she sorta broke the Sabbath law about resting. Getting over her fever at Jesus' hand, then getting up and serving. Yet, let's be dutiful to the Law; but the Sabbath was made for man.

The Gospel of HIM gets smothered in this world by the Gospel of US. What's the old line from the song, 'I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints'? That can be carnal and gross; OR, incarnate, and LIKE...HIM!

He's on the MOVE, my dear ones. HE will not faint, when it comes to pardon and life for the world. His Holy Spirit will not weary of catching His disciples—Peter too!—smack-dab in the midst of the baddest bad we can do—‘I got nothing for YOU about Jesus, FROM....HIM!—

And yet, because HIS Spirit is ALL about HIM—and NOTHING about YOU, ME, sinner, saint, laughing, crying, boasting, giving up...

It's all good.

A day is coming, dear disciples of Jesus. On That Day, all will see and hear--and there will be no competing claims or denials—that the One that ALL men either cheer ON for their own ends, or DENY for their own ends, will ONLY magnify HIMSELF! NOT the good we pretend or the bad we do! And THAT—that Gospel!—does NOT get HIM A...N...Y...T...H...I...N...G.....!

Except disciples; and Peter; and you; and me; who

else in the Name of Jesus? Amen.