

Sermon July 4, 2021
Redeemer, Ramsey
Pastor Michael Linderman

Grace Mercy and Peace from God our Father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Today, in the Gospel lesson, Jesus teaches us how to be vulnerable to the things we can't control.

Jesus' Ministry is going very well.

Mark reports Jesus' message: ch. 1, v. 14-15:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news."

This message is coupled with acts of healing and exorcism.

- He heals people of their illnesses, especially intractable ones; leprosy, long-term bleeding, paralysis, those near death,
- He casts out unclean spirits. They know who Jesus is, and they have no power over him. They must obey him when he casts them out.
- He also has power over the natural world. In Ch 4, he calms the stormy sea.

This successful ministry has made him very popular among the common people of the villages and towns of the countryside.

But the implications of his ministry are disturbing to other people

- That the Kingdom of God has come near
- That God's power is for loosening those in bondage
 - For healing the sick
 - For lifting up the lowly
 - For freeing the oppressed

This implication of the Good News of the kingdom does not sound good to those who are

The landed, the owners, the well-healed, well-invested

They would rather have the status quo

So there are complaints: he eats with sinners and tax collectors; he heals on the sabbath; he assumes authority in his teaching that no one gave to him.

And these concerned interests conspire to tame his power when he is at home. In today's lesson from Mark, in ch. 6, those who know him from before his ministry

Cut him down to size:

Is this not the carpenter?

The son of Mary (fatherless)

The brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon

Are not his sisters here with us?

Everything they know about him is used to make him just one of them

Their knowledge takes him down.

Jesus is surprised at their lack of faith.

After all, who needs faith when you have knowledge?

Jesus admits defeat and moves on. He can only heal a few people.

Sometimes you have to become vulnerable to that which you can't control. It is a way of admitting defeat, yes, but it is not the same thing as giving up.

His response is to simply move on.

And then he organizes the 12 disciples for mission:

Go to villages 2 by 2

Take only your staff; no bread, no bag, no money

Stay in the first house you are accepted in, until you leave that town

If they don't welcome you, shake off the dust from your feet and move on.

And he gave them authority over the unclean spirits;

anointed many with oil and cured them.

This is the lesson for us this morning.

In the face of too much familiarity, and rejection, become vulnerable to that which you cannot control. Be willing to admit defeat.

If you have ever quarreled with a partner, or a friend, or a child, the easiest way for them to win the argument is to take some knowledge they have about you and use it against you.

And many of you know how in those arguments, you sometimes have to know when to stop pushing, and take defeat.

Not pushing for victory. It means to become vulnerable to the situation. You become vulnerable to the resistance of the other person, and you stop pushing for victory. You move on.

The church is also often in this position.
We find ourselves now at the margins of society as a ministry.
We are too familiar in some ways.

The church in the news is largely if not all bad news.
Lutherans may keep their heads down compared to
evangelicals and their political investments
The southern Baptists and their arguments
And Roman Catholics and their lawsuits and sacramental policy
But we are affected by the same issues.
We too struggle with the same issues.
We are part of the Christian church at large, and we can get tarred with the same
brush.

For others, we are not known or understood at all. And they have no interest in
our life, our faith, or our work.
In the face of this kind of knowledge, the message of faith in God's promises
seems weak and useless. And we ourselves are imperfect messengers.

But we also know and trust in the forgiveness of sins. The church is imperfect. It is
made up of fallible human beings.
But Christ came into the world not only to organize the church, but also to die for
it.
The church is built on the forgiveness of sins that Christ gives to us.
The church stands on the power and authority that Christ gives to it.
The church works in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit

It repents of its errors, seeks reconciliation with those it has offended, and moves on.

On this American independence day, you may take a lesson in this for our country and the work of democracy as well.

In a country so deeply divided along political lines, maybe the church is called to be vulnerable to that which we cannot change, and move on.

Moving on, does not mean forgetting, or abandoning others.

But it also means not pushing for victory.

We don't forget, we don't abandon, but we don't push on for victory either.

Rather, we reach out in even more vulnerable ways, in outreach, in visitation, in witness.

We follow Christ's example.

We move on in the ministry of love, healing and release to those who are bound, so that Christ's power in the world might be made known through us.

In our prayers of intercession this morning, one petition reads, God of compassion, you became vulnerable in the person of Jesus Christ in solidarity with the disempowered. Strengthen those who feel faint, give courage to those who fear, and bring wholeness to those in need. Today lord, this is our prayer for us and your church. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.