

5 Epiphany Year B

February 5, 2012

St. Luke ELCA Sheboygan Falls

Mark 1:29-39

### Two Kinds of People

Let us pray. Lord, heal us that we may serve others. AMEN.

How many of you know a woman like Simon's mother-in-law? She reminds me a lot of my own mom in her younger years. There she is sicker than a dog with a high fever that has her down in bed and what is the first thing she does when she is feeling better? She gets up and serves everyone else.

There is a certain kind of person whose identity is all wrapped up in taking care of others—parents, children, spouses, even neighbors. It seems Simon's mother-in-law was that type of person, for whom hospitality is next to godliness.

At any given time there are two kinds of people (my dad used to say,

“Swedes and those who wish they were.”) I would submit that there are those who are in need of healing and those who are able to heal, people who need care and people who need a calling, people who need to be served and people who need to serve.

In Jesus' presence, Simon's mother-in-law quickly moves from one to the other. Jesus takes her hand and lifts her up from her illness. In today's world we tend to view people who serve as lower than those who are served. This is not so in Jesus' way of seeing things. When God took human form he chose to come in the form of one who serves and so there is no greater calling than to follow in his footsteps as Simon's mother-in-law does.

Very quickly word spreads about what Jesus is able to do for people and so the whole community gathers outside Simon's door. Jesus didn't turn any of them away. He healed many of them with various diseases and drove out many people's demons. “What a blessing it must have been

to be a beneficiary of the new life God brings through Christ. The life-giving blessings of Jesus' touch are not limited to the...men and women who knew him in the flesh 2000 years ago...We too have joined the ranks of those...who were touched by Jesus and given new life (either) through physical restoration from infirmity...or spiritual restoration from sin." David Wesley Reid

Most of us can think of times in our lives when we were in need of help as well as time when we felt called to respond to the needs of others. It could be just as simple as someone having a rough week and needing a hug and someone else being willing to give one. Perhaps one person needs a ride to church and another person is more than happy to drive them. One person may be in need of prayer while another is eager to pray for others.

What I find very exciting about this story is that while we might expect that the townsfolk would be both kinds of people

and move from those who are served to God's servants, we wouldn't necessarily expect Jesus to fit in both categories. Yet, even the Great Physician needed to take time for his own healing and refreshment. After his big day of meeting everyone's demands he needed some respite.

Mark 1:35 says: *"Very early, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed."* Of course, as the Son of God, Jesus received his healing and restoration from His relationship with the Father. If even Jesus needed to be cared for at times, we never have to feel badly about ourselves when we feel the need to lean on others.

In the words of the tried and true Bill Withers' song: *"Lean on me, when you're not strong. I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on. For it won't be long 'til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on."*

Some of us may feel like we are more often on the giving end and some more

often on the receiving end, but God gives us all the potential to be both kinds of people with the awesome power of the Holy Spirit. David Wesley Reid tells the story of 20<sup>th</sup> century missionary, Mary Reed. *“As a young woman she determined to bring life to the women of India in the name of Jesus. For eight years she worked under difficult conditions in Cawnpore, India, until her health began to collapse. She was sent to the Himalayas to recuperate, and while there she discovered a colony of 500 lepers living without help or support. Sometime later she returned to India, but within a year her health failed again...and...continued to fail until one day she realized what was happening...she herself had contracted leprosy. Instead of decrying her plight she returned to India where she could work with a community of lepers and bring them the life Christ had brought to her. And so, in Chandag, India, a settlement and a hospital for lepers grew as a result of her efforts.”*

Mary Reed was both broken and in need of

healing AND filled with God’s grace to be able to offer hope and healing of spirit.

We know that not every person who comes to Christ will receive immediate, physical healing. Yet, those who were and are blessed to receive new life in Christ serve to point to the ongoing reality of God’s kingdom beyond the grave, a reality where all the dead in Christ will be raised, the lame will walk, the deaf will hear and the blind will see. Until then we live in hope in the already and not yet, where there are two kinds of people those who are in need of healing and those who heal, those who serve and those who are served and all of us will at one time or another be both. AMEN