

## Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (B) – Mark 1:29-39

An Attitude of Discipleship: *Serving*

Focus Question: *How might God call you to serve this week?*

### word of life

**“He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”** Mark 1:31 (NRSV)

Read Mark 1:29-39

Imagine being in bed with a fever. Imagine your son-in-law bringing home four guests into your home, but you are too sick to serve as their host. Imagine one of those guests being Jesus. Imagine!

This story about Simon’s mother-in-law is an easy one to imagine. Jesus heals her, then takes her by the hand and lifts her up. What a tender image. Even though she literally stood up, there is a sense of being lifted up emotionally which comes with being healed.

Mark describes this woman leaving her sickbed after her fever is gone and serving her guests. Simon’s mother-in-law more than likely had an attitude of serving *before* her illness, but her gratitude at being healed overflows into her care for others.

1. *How do you imagine the conversation around their table?*
2. *Describe a situation in your own life where someone rose off a sickbed and began serving.*

For Jesus, his day is not done. At sundown, sick people and those possessed with demons are brought to the house. In fact, the whole city gathers around the door. Imagine a whole city waiting to be restored to health – at your door. Jesus does not have a 9-to-5 job. His ministry continues into the evening hours as he models the same servant attitude as Simon’s mother-in-law.

3. *Do you think all those who came to be healed wanted to be disciples of Jesus? Why or why not?*

Note how the demons know Jesus. What a contrast to others who have such difficulty discerning the identity of Jesus. Yet Jesus would not let the demons speak.

4. *Why do you think Jesus kept the demons silent?*

There is a consistency between the teaching of Jesus and his living. He does not merely speak of servanthood in his teaching, but exemplifies the life of a servant.

5. *How would you define a serving attitude?*

The next day, Jesus gets up early before dark and goes to a deserted place for prayer. Serving can be exhausting and we can forget the reason we serve. Prayer puts it back in perspective.

6. *Why would Jesus need to find a deserted place for prayer?*

But Simon and his companions hunt him down. You can hear panic in the voices of the disciples, “Everyone is searching for you.” (Mark 1:37 NRSV) But Jesus does not succumb to crowd pressure. Instead, he remains clear about his mission from God. His calling would take him many other places, including the cross, in order to proclaim good news.

7. *What might we learn from Jesus about setting priorities?*

## **word among us**

The new member's class ended with each person sharing possible ways he or she would like to serve the congregation. Each person talked about gifts and areas of interest. When it was Barry's turn, he announced, "I want to be the last person out of the church door." Everyone chuckled.

Barry explained, "I want to turn the lights off and put tables away after receptions and gatherings. Honestly, I will make sure the last dish gets washed, dried, and put away. I will even take out the trash. Sure, I can read lessons at worship. I can teach. But what I really want is to serve by being the last person out the door when the job is done."

1. *What did Barry mean when he said he wanted "to be the last person out the door"?*
2. *Have you ever found yourself in that role? If so, describe how you felt about that role.*
3. *What brings you joy in serving?*

Jesus was often busy serving and helping others, but he also took time out for prayer, even if it meant getting up early in the morning and finding a deserted place. Take a moment and imagine a deserted place. Once that image is locked in your mind, take a deep breath and offer a prayer. Pause and allow God to still your spirit.

4. *Describe an actual deserted place in your neighborhood, church, or home which might be appropriate for prayer.*
5. *Are there other ways to find a deserted place for prayer in the midst of your day?*

It is possible to serve more hours than our bodies will allow, leaving us exhausted, ill-tempered, and resentful. After a long day, Jesus was surrounded by the whole city at his doorstep waiting to be healed. Is it any wonder he got up early and found a deserted place? Even that prayer time was interrupted by his own disciples. They wanted him to know that everyone was searching for him.

6. *How do you balance serving others and prayer?*
7. *How does prayer help us in our serving?*

Sometimes we need a break from our usual ways of serving. Discern God's call to mission in your own life. Consider how God might be calling you to use untapped gifts or honed skills. Perhaps, God is calling you to go out on a limb and tackle a new challenge, using every ounce of life experience, skill, and gift you can muster.

8. *How does God want you to be part of God's mission?*
9. *What new skills might you develop as you serve?*
10. *How might God be calling you to serve?*

## **Prayer**

Christ, instill in my heart an attitude of serving.

## **Dig Deeper**

John 13:1-20



*Daily Discipleship*

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2005 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

[www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship](http://www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship)

## *last word*

Look for a new way to serve in the coming week.