

Reflection

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021

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Today's psalm for morning prayer was Ps. 41 and one line struck me especially: "Heal my soul." I need God to heal my soul!

I find these days the psalms really speak to me as we try to comprehend what took place in our country Jan. 6. But even before that as I have tried to pray over the political situation since the election, what I often do as I pray the psalms is I replace the "I" with "we" and "us."

"Have mercy on us" ... raise us up ... we know your favor: that our foes do not triumph over us. In our integrity you have upheld us, and have set us in your presence forever. ..." That psalm is in our morning prayer for today and was good news for me. The antiphon is "Christ through death has destroyed the one who had the power of death." That is God's promise. We need to believe it, trust it.

The Gospel of Mark today shows Jesus about his mission. His actions witness to God's promise to save us. After having called his first disciples, he goes home with Simon Peter and finds in his house someone who needs healing: Peter's mother-in-law. He grasped her hand and helped her up. The fever left her immediately!

Then they brought to Jesus all who were ill or possessed by demons. Mark says the whole town was gathered and Jesus cured those sick with various diseases and **drove out many demons**.

Jesus has the power to heal and drive out demons. He did it then and is able to do it now. That must be our prayer: "Come Holy Spirit," dispel the evil, the anger, the violence – these are the demons we see in our world, very clearly last week.

Jesus next action is also an important call to us. "Rising very early before dawn, he left, found a deserted place, where he **prayed**."

In these past days, again and again, I have asked myself, how do I pray? "Come Holy Spirit," "Lord have mercy on us." I pray for our leaders our congresspersons. As Peter said to Jesus as he came looking for him, "Everyone is looking for YOU." We are all looking for God, for Jesus! What do we make of all this that is happening? Jesus answers, let us keep going to other towns and continue to preach the good news. So, he went "to their synagogues, **preaching and driving out demons**."

What kind of demons are at work here in our current time? The commentator on this Gospel text reminds us that much of human behavior is driven by fear.

- We fear not being safe, so fear causes us to build walls between us and them.

- Fear drives us to hoard what we have; there might not be enough food, so store shelves are often largely empty.
- Fear keeps us from helping others, so many are isolated and lonely. We believe I have to take care of #1 (myself).
- And of course, the big fear is fear of death.

The commentator offers a quote: *Through fear of death, we are subject to slavery all our lives.*”

We are enslaved by our fears, and the only one to save us from our fears is Jesus who became human, one of us, as the Letter to the Hebrews says. He became like us in every way through what he suffered so he can help us, as he is a merciful and faithful high priest – to free us from our temptations and sin.

Jesus can take us by the hand, as he did the mother-in-law of Peter, and raise us up, healing us of our fears and demons NOW, as we pray over this text.

If we believe God can do this for us, we can find a deep PEACE within ourselves, we will know how to pray and then we can offer our hand to others around us, be instruments of God’s mercy, of God’s Holy Spirit at work in our lives, in our times. Let us believe in this good news!