

## 5th Sunday Epiphany B 18

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February 3, 2018

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.  
Amen.

Our texts for today give us two opposite views of our God. We get the big picture and the close personal touch. We get a great and powerful view along with the tender and caring understanding. Yet in both we come know we have a God who cares and sees us even as God restores and sends us in service.

The people of Judah have been in exile for many years and have in some ways had lost hope that their dream of returning home would ever come true. They are languishing in a foreign land under an oppressive power and wrongly thinking their God was powerless to stop them. It is to these people that God sends the prophet Isaiah. Here he delivers to them a word of hope and promise that the future will be different. It may not come as quickly as they desire, but it will come.

Even for us who believe in an active and powerful God. Even for us who know and believe yet sometimes get lost in our daily activities, distracted by what seems to be a more powerful force controlling our lives. Even for us, we might be tempted to wonder where is our God. Does God still care or is God still able to rescue us from all that is occupying our hearts and our minds.

To the people and to us God sends these words; 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? Have you not been told from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?' Isaiah begins with these words which always catch my ear when I hear them because I like you get distracted or possessed by the daily routines and pressures in life and am blinded by what is around me. I fail to remember, I sometimes forget the greatness of our God who is in control.

Isaiah reminds the people that their God is powerful and is the creator of all things. God sits in the heavens and sees all things, even the powerful and the proud who are like insects to God. A great image that even when the powers and the powerful around us seem to be larger than life and control all that is around us, our God is even greater and more powerful. So Isaiah encourages them to look up and see all that God is at work doing and has been doing since the beginning of time. Isaiah offers them words of hope so they might not be discouraged. For our God is a God of strength and promise, one who does not sleep or grow weary and offers that strength and courage to us as we wait for the coming of the kingdom we look forward to.

Even with God being the one who sits in the heavens, our God is caring enough to reach out and know us, showing us the love and care he has for us. Our problems, our situations, those things which possess us matter to the God who also tends to the cosmos. It mattered so much that God sent Jesus to come to show us God's love and to bring the kingdom of God near.

So even seeing and hearing and knowing our God cares for us his children, it became even more personal when Jesus arrived to show us what it means to live in the kingdom of God and to serve others in Christ name, to minister and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

For the Gospel of Mark, it is Jesus who both in word and deed proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of God. Jesus does so publicly and privately as he does in our texts for today. Jesus had just healed the man possessed with a demon in the synagogue and then walks across the street to the house of Simon and Andrew. There Jesus being told that the

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mother-in-law of Simon is ill with a fever. In response Jesus goes to her privately and lifts her up and she is healed. The words used here is more about the woman being restored to life, the same words Mark will use later as Jesus in the raising of Lazarus. It is stay the woman has been restored, healed and given back her vocation of service.

Now with the text saying, 'then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.' Often these words had been used to keep women in general in the role of a servant, to say women are only about serving the men and caring for their needs. There is not what it is saying. In one sense it is about her being restored to her traditional role, but that is so that she is not dishonored or looked down upon. One of the roles of the woman of the household was to offer hospitality to anyone who entered the home. So in being healed, Jesus restored her honor and dignity as she fulfilled that role in society.

But more importantly the word used here as translated as 'serve' is the same word used for the disciples and followers of Jesus. Here 'diakonia' is about serving as a disciple of Jesus, to minister to others in the name and manner of which Jesus served. As even Jesus tells us later in the gospel; *'So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'*

Jesus not only healed this woman, but we are told that the very evening many more from the community were brought to the door of the house where Jesus was staying. There Jesus took time healing those who were ill from all types of disease and casting out demons from all who were possessed. Here the whole community was restored to a new way of living, relationships were renewed and community was reestablished. In those days even more than for us, when a person was ill or possessed, they were excluded from daily life, isolated from the family and others in the community. So to be healed or cured was to be restored to the community and to the outside world.

In thinking about the healing which took place for this woman, I was reminded of conversations I have had with many of you in the past few weeks as you recovered from illness or surgery or injury. We have all been there at one time or another. While our recovery was not as quick as it was for Simon's mother-in-law or the others brought to Jesus, we were healed, we were restored to our usual place or role in life. And how often when that took place did we quickly get back to the business of helping others, especially those who helped us during our illness and time of recovery. In doing so we were restored to a new life able to serve others once again.

So have you not seen, have you not heard, do you not know the God of the universe cares for and about you. That the holy God of Israel, continues to love and to bless you and the world through the works of us his children. For we have not only a God who loves and cares for us, but one who sent his Son, Jesus to die for us so that we might see and hear and know that the Kingdom of God has come near. So that in his being lifted up, we too might be lifted up and healed from all that possesses us, all that keeps us distracted from the love we have been shown in Jesus our Savior. Now having been healed, we too might go forth declaring the kingdom of God has come near in as we serve the world in Christ name.

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AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

*Pastor Michael*

### **Isaiah 40:21-31**

### **Mark 1:29-39**

As soon as they (Jesus and the disciples) left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' Jesus answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.