

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS  
 (or, “Do YOU Believe that God Wants  
 YOU to Do Something Special?”)  
 Mark 1:29-39  
 February 8, 2009 – Ordinary – 5  
 Oakland Avenue PCUSA-Rock Hill  
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**Mark 1:29-39( NRSV)**

- 29 *As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.*
- 30 *Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.*
- 31 *He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.*
- 32 *That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.*
- 33 *And the whole city was gathered around the door.*
- 34 *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.*
- 35 *In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.*
- 36 *And Simon and his companions hunted for him.*
- 37 *When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.”*
- 38 *He answered, “Let us go onto the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”*
- 39 *And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.*

The passage of scripture that we have before us today shows us a picture of Jesus as he moves from town to town, preaching and healing.

Presbyterian theology says that (1) there is a God, and (2) in Jesus Christ we know that God loves us. That is the primary emphasis in our theology.

A secondary and less important emphasis in Presbyterian theology is the stress upon Jesus serving as our model for living. We look to Jesus for teaching and guidance in setting our ethics and our priorities in life. **Are you with me thus far?**

See if you agree with this next thought. If we say that Jesus is to serve as our model, then according to today’s passage in Mark, what you and I ought to be about is **preaching** and **healing**.

For most of us, the **preaching** part is easy enough. We understand that “preaching” is more than just what the preacher does here in this pulpit on Sundays.

**“Preaching”** is done by the encounter we have over coffee, or  
 while we are playing bridge or basketball, or  
 in a dormitory “bull” session, and  
 by our daily living which reflects our priorities  
 and our commitments and our standards.

We may say with our lips that we love God, but if we selfishly use another person at the same time, **we know what we have preached,** don't we?

Bible-talk in the New Testament puts it this way:

*“Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters,  
 are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister,  
 whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.”*  
 (I John 4:20; NRSV)

For most of us, the **preaching** part of our following Jesus is easy enough to understand.

It is the **healing** part that frightens us! And it really should NOT frighten us.

I personally believe that Jesus worked miracles of healing.

He made blind people to see;

He made the lame to walk;

He made the deaf to hear;

He raised people from the dead.

Jesus certainly deserves the title of **“The Great Physician.”**

If you stop to think about it, God has made some of us to be physicians and nurses and technicians and counselors to bring about wholeness and health in both body and mind. In addition, our Witness Committee of Session and Providence Presbytery provide opportunities which give some of our members the challenge of serving God in helping to make people whole and healthy in various parts of the world. In my one year as your Interim Pastor, I have heard one of our members, Dr. Susan Collins, report on her medical trip to Haiti.

At the same time, just as important in making people whole and healthy is the miracle of caring and loving. Some would hold that this is even more important. And the ministry of caring and loving is something that God can use **everyone** in this room to do!

HAVE YOU visited someone in a nursing home,  
 particularly someone to whom you are not related?

HAVE YOU sent a get-well card to someone who  
 is sick or have you written a friendly note to someone  
 who is house-bound or shut-in?

HAVE YOU telephoned another member of our church to say that you are thinking about them?

HAVE YOU involved yourself in some kind of community betterment project such as Meals on Wheels or Hope House or Habitat for Humanity?

When you think about it, miracles are sometimes LARGE and miracles are sometimes small.

And many times the small miracles are the most important miracles!

Behind the LARGE miracles and the small miracles lie **the ethics of Jesus**, and it is imperative that you and I as the followers of Jesus use **the ethics of Jesus** to change the world. Would you agree with me on that?

Leo Erny was one of the best Presbyterian Elders with whom I have had the pleasure to work. We had the Elder-Care system at the church in Florida, and Leo asked me to go with him on a visit to one of his Elder-Care flock. Janie was about 70 years old, in a wheel chair and lived by herself, doing most of her own care-giving with the help of a Pasco County Council on Aging outreach worker. It was quickly evident that Janie was a depressed person, one reason being that she had absolutely no family at all.

Led by the Holy Spirit, I believe, as I look back in hindsight, Leo Erny asked Janie if she would be able to telephone the members of our Presbyterian Men of the Church to remind them of our up-coming monthly breakfast meeting. Janie agreed, and two wonderful things happened. **Janie became** positive in her outlook on life, and

**Janie became** our official Tims Church telephone reminder for many of our congregational organizations, filling much of her day with friendly telephone conversations with many of our church members.  
IT WAS A MIRACLE!

Listen to this: if there is going to be any “**caring**” in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, care-less world in which we live, then you and I as Christians will have to do it in imitation of God-in-the-flesh, Jesus Christ. **Do you think that is correct?**

The late (d.1996), noted astronomer **Carl Sagan** says that less than ¼ of the world’s population is even nominally Christian. And you know what that means. It means that ¾ of the world’s population [of around 7 billion (?)] are NOT even nominally Christian! Just think how very important the work of our Oakland Avenue Presbyterian missionaries whom we support is!

At the same time, there are some limited ways that you and I here in Rock Hill can witness to our faith in God in relation to **international people** who may be here studying or working. We can be kind to them in casual meetings on the Winthrop campus and on the streets of our town.

We can get involved in the *Rock Hill International Friendship Ministry* which seeks to welcome and befriend internationals in Rock Hill.

We can participate in and support our own congregational and presbytery medical mission efforts.

We can encourage and financially support our coming summer OAPC youth mission trip to Canada and its work at a presbytery camp there.

However, we must admit that the major thrust of mission to the world must come as a united effort through our denomination and its program of world mission and service. The problems of our world are enormous. For instance, in reference to Jesus' admonition **to us** in Matthew 25 in concern for the hungry and thirsty and stranger and naked and sick and those in prison.....

....DID YOU KNOW            there are 500 million malnourished people,  
    there are 1.2 billion people without pure drinking water,  
    there are 16 million refugees,  
    there are 1.2 billion without adequate clothing or shelter,  
    there are 1.6 billion without effective medical care,  
    and untold thousands, unjustly imprisoned, with their  
    dependents in need of help???

[information from World Health Forum in the "One Great Hour" publicity from PCUSA]

So, what can you and I do about it?

- [1] We can look at our priorities and values in life; we can think twice before we spend money carelessly or selfishly.
- [2] We can look again at our giving to the church and perhaps supplement our gifts with special mission offerings.
- [3] We can tell John O'Kain that we want to get serious about our University ministry program and offer ourselves to assist in PSA and work with international students.
- [4] We can wrestle with the possibility that God may be asking one of us here in Oakland Avenue PCUSA to go as an agricultural missionary or a medical missionary or an evangelistic missionary or an educational missionary or as a Volunteer in Mission to some third world country where there is a need.
- [5] We can decide to become a teacher in one of our desperately poor counties in South Carolina where ignorance and poverty compete with that of third world countries.

and on and on the list can go.....

**Tony Campolo** is one of my heroes in the faith. This good Baptist brother has for years taught sociology at Eastern Baptist College in Pennsylvania, written many books, and been an inspirational speaker at countless conferences, the most recent of which was the Montreat Collegiate Conference which was attended by some of our

Winthrop PSA students and John O’Kain. As you might guess there are numbers of Tony Campolo stories, one of which I want you to hear.

It seems that one year Tony Campolo was the major address speaker at a women’s conference. At some point in the program the women were being challenged with a goal of several thousands of dollars for their mission project, and Dr. Campolo was asked if he would pray for God’s blessings upon the women as they considered what they might do to achieve the goal.

To her surprise, Dr. Campolo came up to the podium and graciously declined her invitation, saying the following:

“You already have the resources necessary to complete this mission project right here within this room. It would be inappropriate to ask for God’s blessing when God has already blessed you with abundance and the means to achieve this goal. The necessary gifts are in your hands. As soon as we take the offering and underwrite this mission project, we will thank God for freeing us to be the generous, responsible, and accountable stewards that we are called to be as Christian disciples.”

When the offering was received, the mission challenge was oversubscribed, and Dr. Campolo led a joyous prayer of thanksgiving for God’s abundant blessings and for the faithful stewardship of God’s people.

[Illustrations Unlimited edited by James S. Hewett, Wheaton, Illinois, Tyndale House Publishers, 1988, p. 239]

My friends, the gospel writer Mark has given us a picture of one day in the life of Jesus, and in it we see Jesus preaching and teaching and making people whole and healthy. **BECAUSE YOU AND I ARE CHRISTIANS, WE ARE COMPELLED TO IMITATE THE CARING OF JESUS IN OUR DAILY LIVES.**

Do you think that is true?

If you do, when are you going to do what Jesus told you to do?