

Interpreting Jesus' Parables and Miracles of Mark Chapters 4 & 5, we have followed a consistent pattern of hearing the story at Face Value, then honing in on deeper and deeper levels of meaning, sailing back and forth between Jewish Galilee and Genaserrret of the Gentiles.

We described that without our intentional planting and cultivation, FAITHFUL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD, like spores grows in our lives, requiring only to be recognized and harvested.

We discussed how the mustard seed being the smallest of weed seeds aggressively infests fields and gardens with massive roots, and FAITH invades all of our being, identity and relationships.

We heard how Jesus paid attention to the chaos of the storm and the chaos of the mind of the man called LEGION, and listening to each Jesus calmed the chaos.

We came to recognize that Mark described this sick pagan Gentile even attempted to use the names of Jesus and GOD in an exorcism to cast out Jesus! But Jesus instead of conquering the demons sending them into nothingness, sent the demons into swine which threw themselves into the Sea.

We observed as Jesus, coming to his hometown and family, was not given respect or the authority he had earned, but was belittled to where he could accomplish very little. Have you ever felt like that? I have. Where confident of people's trust, you could take on insurmountable obstacles as if the circumstance of the day; but being micro-managed, without people's trust, it appeared as though all you could accomplish was to "Sigh." Undaunted Jesus sent his disciples out into the world as Apostles.

Last week, The Book of Amos prophesied of three revelations of GOD's destruction of the world, and while GOD Repented of this each time, while Amos affirmed he was no professional prophet, because the Government and people did not repent or change, GOD SIGHED that we would not be True and right.

This morning, it occurs to me that something different, something far important, happens here in the 6th Chapter, which I never noticed before, which I believe needs to challenge us by reversing our direction. Rather than hearing Parables and Healing Stories and searching for deeper and deeper levels of meaning; that perhaps we can take a larger view of the Story of Jesus, recognizing these as being individual pieces of something far more Grand.

Is there anyone among us who has never heard of Jesus Feeding the 5000; or Walking on Water? What if, in addition to our recognizing these individual stories as being Parables about Faith and Love as a Healing Story and honing in on this, we also took a step back, to reflect what these stories mean when taken together? The problem of Jesus' community and family, even for Jesus own disciples, was that to them, to us, Jesus was too familiar.

The Gospel of MARK is written with what is routinely described as "The Messianic Secret."

We named a few weeks ago, that each of us need to consider for ourselves who we are and what we seek. Are we Human Creatures searching to be GOD, searching for what is sacred?

OR were we already created in the image of God, in life seeking to be more human and more humane?

Mark begins with Jesus as a man 30-33 years of age, who like all the world, responded to the Preaching of John to REPENT and be baptized. Jesus comes up out of the Water just as a Dove descends upon him from Heaven with the words "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased" at which Jesus is driven into the wilderness to be tempted. For MARK, Jesus is a human being like all of us, who at his Baptism by John begins to question for himself what it means to be the Messiah, and is uncomfortable with that identity getting too far ahead of his own comfort level.

The Gospel of JOHN, telling many of the same stories, began at another starting point with, "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God." According to JOHN, Jesus is wholly Divine, and his Gospel becomes investigation of what it means that Jesus becomes wholly human?

When Jesus' own family and community do not grant him the power and identity of being The Messiah on the terms he had accepted at that point, I believe this challenged and disturbed him. I believe that hereafter through Mark, Jesus is questioning BELIEF In what it means to be the MESSIAH SENT FROM GOD and also WHAT IT MEANS for the Messiah to be Rejected.

There are times for all of us, when we question "I was baptized and Confirmed, but what does it mean for me to believe?" I studied and apprenticed and worked at this career all of my life, but what is my identity now?" We stood before the Church, Family and Community, taking Vows of Marriage, but 25, 40, 50 years and more, who are we to each other?" Love is different at 63 or 83 than it was at 23! We conceived and had a baby; what does it mean to be a Mother or Father, or that I am now the mother of father of adults?" The issue is not simply "do you believe" but WHAT do we believe, what are THE DEPTHS of those beliefs, and what does our belief mean WHEN LIFE CHANGES?

Ironically according to Mark, KING HEROD wrestles with Belief in Jesus Divinity! Herod enjoyed listening to and sparring with John the Baptizer, but backed into a corner by his personal commitments, he had John beheaded. Suddenly this Jesus is able to SAY & DO what John did. As such, Herod becomes the first, long before Jesus' crucifixion, to believe Jesus is connected with John; AND Resurrection from the dead!

Jesus sent his disciples out as Apostles, and returning they come with experience of preaching, praying, healing people and casting out demons. Have you ever created a problem of your own success, where you were uncertain what to do next? Jesus had called Disciples as a Teacher attracts students. When people challenged him, he sent out those disciples, commissioning them. Now, as the Apostles return, they are bringing thousands of followers with them. What is Jesus supposed to do, how do you respond to others' expectations? We were just getting to know one another, some still grieving 2016-2019, when COVID19 happened. Some questioned if this were THE END OF THE WORLD? I think we responded well at the time; but now that that crisis is ending, where do we go from here?

Jesus had compassion.

That seems so basic, of course Jesus would, but no one else did!

Jesus paid attention to the needs of people. The people were hungry so he fed them.

His disciples were alone in a storm at night so he came to them.

Families and friends were suffering and Jesus was present with them, not even saying or doing anything, they simply reached out to touch his robe and they were made to feel better.

The beauty of Jesus' Feeding the 5000 is not only that he took a peasant's meal of 5 loaves and 2 fish and everyone had enough, but that he ministered to them. Jesus, who had been helpless to overcome the doubts of his own community, commanded the people to sit down on the grass in companies, by hundreds and by fifties. Jesus looked up to heaven, blessed and broke and gave to the people what they needed and they had 12 baskets full left over. In the same way, after crossing the Red Sea, Moses father-in-law Jethro, a Priest of Midian had come to see the Hebrews in the wilderness. Jethro saw how the people were coming to Moses daily to judge their disputes and problems, and they were hungry. Moses' father-in-law responded "You are going to wear out the people and yourself!" Have the people be seated in companies, by 50s and by 100s, and God provided them bread from heaven.

When I came to be your pastor, we needed the Sound System to work better, so we replaced it.

We needed the light from the Sun to not be so bright, so we balanced the sunlight.

We Needed to have our Worship of God available to persons at LaPosada and for those traveling; we needed to be able to have Committee Meetings throughout the year, so we paid attention to the need.

People needed to look to the high hills, to see from whence our help comes, so while it is more inconvenient we had compassion and lowered the camera, to look up.

We needed to be safe AND YET we needed to be together in the Worship of God, so we created protocols when needed, to keep everyone healthy while worshipping together.

After a year of not being able to do so, we needed to celebrate Communion together, when we could not pass trays or reach into a common cup, and not virtually, and we were able to share together and do so.

How often we react to one another, the disciples' dumbfounded: "How can we possibly feed 5000?" Or we try to make sense out of the circumstance, in the midst of all the anxiety in our lives... That looks like Jesus walking on the water, but that cannot be, it must be a ghost...

When what we really need is for someone to listen, to hear us and have compassion.

So I need to ask you "What do you need?"

Not what do you want? But what do you NEED?

There are solutions to all the problems of the world, but we need to listen and we need to have COMPASSION for Others, to believe we can do miracles together.

BUT there is one thing more, we need to wonder and believe in our heart that perhaps just possibly, that others are not only people in competition with us, but there is a little bit of the divine in other people and we can be more humane.