

I Want to be a Child of the Light.

And the gospel of Mark moves at the speed of Light!

We are still in ch. 1 here. I'm gonna recap the action:

John baptizes Jesus.

Coming up outta the water, Jesus hears God: "you are my beloved son!"

Spirit drives him into the wilderness. 40 days. wild animals. Satan. temptation. Then: angels minister to him.

With John the Baptist in prison, Jesus starts preaching in Galilee.

Simon Peter & Andrew. James & John. They *must have* heard him preaching because when he calls, they immediately leave their boats and follow.

What was he preaching? **"THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD!"**

What? "Gospel" really means "good news" "glad tidings"!

And what makes God's Kingdom –God's governing– Good News? Isaiah tells us today: "God gives power to the faint." And our Psalm: God rebuilds; gathers exiles, heals the brokenhearted, knows each name.

and here in Gospel of Mark, it's Godpower at the speed of Light!

Still chapter 1: Bam! Sabbath day. Simon Peter & Andrew's hometown. Jesus in the synagogue. **Astounding** authority! People are blown away!

There's this man there —afflicted! evil spirit. Jesus frees the man – sends that demon packing, ...and the rumors spread like wildfire!

He's not only preaching good news, he **IS** good news! – energy, hope, healing, compassion, common sense, steadfastness.

And those 4 new disciples caught up in the action, growing in faith!

Now today's story— Arriving at their house, they find Simon Peter's mother-in-law has ...a fever...

... Now recently, the flu seems to have made its rounds through our area. Anyone here get it?

... Any of you remember what it's like to have a fever?

Show me.... What's the fever posture?

Floppy, right? Arms and legs heavy. Hands floppy.

You *want* to raise your head, but only one eyebrow makes it up... and not for long. You seem to be breathing out more than in. ... deflated.

Fevers make you puny.

And think about it. Back then, no ibuprofen to fight a fever. No antibiotics. A fever's pretty scary. Surely, the fear of death was in that room. —in that house.

But those 4 disciples are now steeped in Good News. They know Jesus' Godpower, so they just tell him "Hey. My mother-in-law's sick."

FOLKS, this is the pattern of intercessory prayer: First *you give yourself* into God's presence, then you bring others into that presence.

And here's Jesus' first recorded healing— he reaches out, grasps her hand and "**raises her up**" from the fever. From the fear of death, he "**raises her up.**" Suzanne Guthrie points out, the same word "**raised up**" —the verb ***egeiró***—is used for Jesus' Resurrection later on.

It's Resurrection-style Good News! A human body experience. Still Chapter 1

----- Before, I asked you to show me **FEVER**.

Now show me **GOOD NEWS**. How do we act when we get good news?

When you get that dream job? When –outta the blue– the most charming one in your high school invites YOU to prom?

What are the postures of good news? Show me a little...

---maybe some of you can remember back a week ago when the Seahawks had high hopes of getting another touchdown in the last minutes of the Superbowl. How that felt for them. Or when the Patriots actually managed to squeak out their win.

What **did** good news look like and feel like for them? Show me.

Well, you breathe in more than out.... Your chest inflates. Maybe you jump up and down. wiggle! Good news is the opposite of droopy fever. Good News means energy and joy and hope – **Gospel** Good News means dignity!

Jesus “**raises up**” Simon Peter’s mother-in-law. She is energized. And she “**ministers**” to them. –just like the angels “**ministered**” to Jesus in the wilderness and built him back up. same word: The Greek verb **diakoneo**, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law becomes a **deacon** ... for them.

And the crowds stream to that house, friends & family bringing ailing loved ones. And Jesus healing and casting out demons. And all are being steeped and strengthened in the Good News –the gospel of Godpower right there.

O my gosh! Right here! already in chapter 1,

Scholar Megan McKenna writes: “Simon's house, run by his mother-in-law, becomes a household of God, a church, a gathering of those in need of healing and forgiveness. [...] the new gathering place, the new company of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

Already Chapter 1: intercession, resurrection and church, the gathering of the faithful, energized by Good News in word and deed, empowered to serve – to minister to each other and to welcome others, generations of discipleship.

<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Guthrie quotes Megan McKenna’s *On your Mark: Reading Mark in the Shadow of the Cross*. edge of enclosure Epiphany5B

—a pattern of empowerment and ministry!

Jesus himself: baptized & energized in God’s love, then tempted; then strengthened/ministered to by angels, then preaching, teaching, healing, then ministered to /strengthened by the mother-in-law, then more ministry; Then sleep and prayer and on to the next ministry.

The 4 disciples: Called and heartened by witnessing Jesus; they in turn bring the mother-in-law into the presence and power of God in Christ.

And we see the same pattern in her: her healing gives her an “evangelical” abundance of strength. She hops up and starts ministering...

Can you imagine the energy, excitement and Godpower and ministry that extended in concentric ripples from the healings at Simon Peter’s door?

This is the flow and ebb of our faith lives and our Church life.

Here we gather for Good News, steep ourselves in the presence of God, hold beloved others in God’s presence for healing & transformation. Here we raise each other up. But the strength we gain here is also for ministry beyond ourselves.

When disciples track Jesus down as he’s praying: “Hey. Everyone’s looking for you.” He replies “...I know, but “Let’s move on. Gotta spread the Good News in the neighboring towns also.”

In Paul’s ministry —we read today—a similar drive to move on and spread the Good News of Godpower to as many communities as possible:

Paul writes: “To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. ... To those outside the law I became as one outside the law ...so ... I might win those outside the law. ... I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save *some*. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.”

To me –because I minister in a different Language– this means Paul learned the languages, the logic, the perspectives, of these different communities in order to reach out to and “serve” them, “raise them up” more efficiently in the Good News of Godpower.

My favorite anecdote of a person becoming like others to serve them, was shared by a woman who had been a drug addict and street prostitute for over a decade about one of her first days in a rehab community called Magdalene House in Nashville TN. She was nervous about meeting the priest who founded the program. —worried about being judged, I guess, or feeling awkward around a religious person. Waiting in a group of women, lookin’ around..., finally she asked when the priest was s’posed to show up. “Oh, that’s her right there.” The Rev. Becca Stevens was wearing a cut-offs and a T-shirt and had her toddler on her hip —looking like any other woman there. —And many of you will be proud to know that our own Magdalene Community here in St. Louis actually is opening its doors this April after 3 intense years of preparation! Thanks to those of you who have helped!

So as we gather today celebrating the Good News of Christ incarnate in this congregation of St. Martin’s, I ask you to consider:

- What’s been the ebb and flow of your faith life?
- When you come here on Sundays –and other times– are you consciously seeking the Gospel —becoming more aware of the Good News of God’s power at work in and through you?
- Do you feel that —in your body, in your postures of prayer and praise?
- Are you building faithful patterns of practicing the Presence of God and bringing others into that presence here in this community and in your personal prayers and spiritual practices?
- Are you reaching out to others and raising them up?
- Are you willing to reach up and grasp a hand extended to you?

- In what ways are you learning new languages, new perspectives? Becoming like others in order to further share the Good News of God's power in Christ?

If you are feeling playful and brave enough,  
I encourage you to partner with a person near you, as a way of remembering the  
“raising up to ministry” that happens in today's gospel.

One of you could stand first and grasp the hand of the other and “raise that  
person up”.

You could take turns... during the Episcopal calisthenics remaining in our worship  
today.

The first opportunity occurs now, as we stand to say together the Nicene Creed.

I think the next opportunity occurs at the passing of the Peace — so then you'll  
be even.

So let us raise each other up as we stand to recite the traditional foundations of  
our faith in Christ.