

**February 4, 2018 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Mark 1:29-39**

Quote from Mohamed Omar from Star Tribune, 2/2/18, page B3.

**Let us pray:** May the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Holy God. Amen.

**Grace and peace, healing and hope to you, through Jesus Christ.**

**Last Sunday our service ended with a beautiful song** that comes from Central America, #538.

In English there is a line that repeats.

A number of you came out of church still singing it. Join in if it sounds familiar:

The angels are not sent into our world of pain  
to do what we were meant to do in Jesus' name;  
that falls to you and me and all who are made free.  
Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.

This week's gospel story picks up on the heels of last week's, where Jesus called the unclean spirits out of the man in the synagogue.

Today they've just left that synagogue and it's on to healing and praying.

**Like last week, we enter this scripture using I wonder... and I notice.**

We're all preachers this morning, engaging the scripture, living in the tensions.

You've heard the gospel read once and in a few minutes I'll read it again, slowly.

Your job is to interrupt me—and I mean it.

Interrupt using a phrase that begins either "I wonder... (whatever you wonder)" or "I notice..."

10:30am: I'll repeat what you said so that it's amplified and all can hear it better.

After that, another person may jump in with something they wonder or notice,

or I'll continue until I'm interrupted again.

**So today it may sound like this, and I'm starting at the beginning of the passage:**

"As soon as they left the synagogue..."

I wonder who They are.

Or, I notice that they are moving around quickly.

**Remember, only two rules...**

**1. There are no wrong answers, let the Spirit lead us as a community.**

You may feel like you don't know enough, but really those can be the best interruptions.

Your job is to interrupt... It only works if you do.

**2. Use the structure. Begin your interruption with I wonder... or I notice...**

**Ready? Are your voices ready? My name is Jen, what's your name? Who is going to win tonight?**  
(READ)

**Let me offer a few things I've been wondering and noticing, and a couple of stories.**

**I notice that even though Jesus really did seem to be all things to all people,  
he very consciously was NOT all things all of the time.**

He paused, he retreated, he sought balance, alignment.

In the midst of a culture that for us so often seems out of control, I am grateful for this example Jesus offers.

**In a similar spirit, I notice that movement between action and reflection.**

Healing and curing and casting out... and then the deserted place and the prayer.

I love these verses and the promise that we don't have to always be doing something:

that the rhythm is indeed Jesus' own... action, reflection, action, reflection.

What's important, though, is to remember that we all claim that reflection in different way:

for Jesus that day it was the deserted place in the stillness of the early morning,

for some it's the well-used devotional book they keep next to their chair,

and for someone else it's a long run, or yoga, or dancing, or journaling,

or for another it's lighting a candle, or that cup of tea, or a piece of artwork. Action and reflection.

**And I notice that line: They told him about her at once.**

Isn't that just what we do when we lift up a friend or a family member in prayer?

They told Jesus about her at once.

It reminds me of our healing opportunities, and that space in the prayers where the assisting minister invites us in silence or aloud to utter the prayers we hold deeply in our hearts.

One of you told me the story this week of sitting in the same spot week after week quietly whispering the name of your friend and co-worker, Susie, who was in need of healing.

After a year, someone kindly, curiously asked, Who is this Susie that you pray for?

To which the other woman replied:

"Well, she's little, and she's tough, and she was a wonderful operating room nurse."

They told Jesus about her at once—our action, our calling, begins when we lift up one another in prayer.

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Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.

**I also wonder about healing; so often we think of healing as an individual thing.**

Oh, it is, and it's so much more:

Speaking at Luther Seminary during the Monday King holiday,

Rev. Ken Wheeler said that we must address racism in our congregations because it is killing us.

**It is killing us.**

**On Thursday afternoon I stood** with an inspiring group of faith leaders, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, at Dar Al-Farooq Mosque on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, in Bloomington.

That's the mosque that was bombed this summer.

In the wake of that bombing on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 10 Mosques are becoming part of ISAIAH.

Like our congregation, they have invited their members to be faith delegates,

beginning at the caucuses this Tuesday,

asking potential elected leaders if they will commit to that faith agenda I shared last Sunday:

a democracy that honors every person's dignity, and an economy that allows everyone to thrive.

This week as their members were training to participate in the caucus, people threatened them and questioned their participation in our shared life, in our very democracy.

Mohamed Omar, the Executive Director of Dar Al-Farooq, said, "We love our faith, but after we were bombed, we understood that our very lives depend on claiming our voices with people of faith."

He continued, "We know personally what can happen when powerful people use the language of fear and division to build their bridge to power."

Thursday afternoon was particularly moving because we said publicly that racism and Islamophobia, and all the rest of the fear mongering: **they are dividing us, they are killing us.**

And the truth is our faith calls us, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, to stand together.

That's the healing I pray for just as surely as I pray for each one of you and those that we love.

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to do what we were meant to do in Jesus' name;  
that falls to you and me and all who are made free.  
Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.

**Let us pray:** We cry out for healing, O God, healing and wholeness. Hear our prayers, our sighs, our acting and our resting, our pleas for those we love, for ourselves, for our neighbors, for our world. Reveal your hope in us and through us. Amen.