

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

Last Sunday, we saw a typical day in the life of Jesus.

He went to the Synagogue and taught there – amazing the crowds with his authoritative teaching and his ability to cast out a demon.

And now, we hear the rest of that day, as Jesus continues healing people, beginning with Peter's Mother-in-Law.

I. Restored to Wholeness

A. So after his morning at the Synagogue, Peter takes Jesus home for dinner.

1. When they arrive, Jesus is told that Peter's Mother-in-Law is ill with a fever.

2. Jesus goes in, takes her hand, and the fever leaves her.

3. And after her healing she gets up and serves them.

4. Now, I want to be clear, this is not one of those “the place of women is in the kitchen” stories.

5. Rather, this is to demonstrate the completeness of her healing – she is so well that she is able to get up from her bed and begins to **serve** the household guests.

6. Thus the healing of Jesus is more than physical wellness – it is restoration to wholeness and the ability to rejoin the community.

B. Now, it's interesting to note that the word translated as “*serve*” is the same word that was used when the angels “**waited on**” Jesus in the wilderness.

1. Later Jesus will use this same verb to describe himself as “*one who comes to serve*” (Mk 10:45).

2. As one scholar put it: “Here Peter’s Mother-in-Law embodies the ideal of discipleship as service to others.”

3. Thus, we see that the response to Jesus – to restoration and wholeness – is SERVICE.

4. Service to others is the essence of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, as we spread Jesus’ love to all those we come into contact with.

5. So what does this mean to US in a time of pandemic and discord?

6. Let me suggest this idea.

II. Planting Seeds

A. In the chapter of the book the Book Group read for this past week, Bishop Curry talks about this kind of service and our role in it.

1. He begins with this question:

- *What’s the best time to plant a tree?* Twenty years ago.
- *What’s the second- best time?* Right now. (p.120)

2. He then says, The best time to plant a seed is now.

3. Now the seed he’s talking about are the seeds of change – the seeds of making an impact.

- *Change is a long, slow march heavenward...*, he writes.

4. Bishop Curry then talks about what he might have expected to get done when he became Presiding Bishop, but determined *What I’ve learned in the intervening years is that **my job is only to sow seeds.** That’s everyone’s job.* (p.121)

5. He continues, *Human progress and change for the good is never linear ... The journey is always a struggle. But the movement is always forward, no matter the obstacles.* (p.121)

- Quoting Frederick Douglas, he writes, “*If there is no struggle there is no progress.*”

6. Then he continues, *All human progress and change for the good, whether individual or social, is the result of struggle, often long and laborious.*

- *Our task is to do our task, not to do every task needed for progress to happen.* (p.121-122)

7. *The nature of progress is struggle, he writes, and if we give up because victory seems so far away or outside our individual grasp that we can't see it, then we've lost already.*

- Our job is to do our job, and let God do God's job. (p.123)

B. Later Bishop Curry writes, *My job is to plant the seeds of love, and to keep on planting, even – or especially – when bad weather comes.*

1. *It is folly, he writes, to think I can know the grand plan, how my small action fits into the larger whole.*

- All I can do is check myself, again and again: Do my actions look like love? (p 134)

2. He continues, *Progress does happen, but not always when we want it to, or in the way we think it will.*

- But this much I know: If I let God be God, and I do my job in God's economy, that's enough!

3. Bishop Curry concludes the chapter with these words, *Since we can't start twenty years ago, the best time to start is today. (p 139)*

III. Living Wholeness

A. As we wait in this time of COVID, we long for a time of WHOLENESS.

1. We pray for a time when we can move beyond being “safer at home” and return to being together for worship and to reach out in service.

2. For as we learn from Peter's Mother-in-law, service to others is the true response to Jesus.

3. Service to others is the essence of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, as we work to spread Jesus' love.

4. How are we called to serve?

5. What are the seeds we are called to plant?

6. How are we called to reach out in Jesus' name?

7. How do we respond to the love Jesus has poured into our hearts by sharing it with another?

B. As we move ahead, we will work to EXPAND our food ministry to feed those in need, whose lives have been affected by this virus.

1. We will work to together to REBUILD the fabric of our life together.

2. And we will come together to find out what it means to be St. Columba's in post-pandemic times.

3. We will reach out to those left hurting by the isolation and loneliness of this disease and welcome them with loving arms and invite them to be part of the new St. Columba's.

4. That is the true meaning of service – service in Jesus' name.

5. This is the WHOLENESS we are called to share.

6. These are the seeds we are to plant – the SEEDS of God's love.

Let us Pray

Lord our God, on the way of goodness, if we stumble, lift us up; on the way of holiness, if we stray, bring us back; on the way of kindness, if we toughen, soften our hearts; that we may draw others to you and your saving power, by our words and example; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, are one God, forever and ever. AMEN.

(David Adam, Traces of Glory: Prayers for the Church Year)