

## "Almost Super"

Isaiah 40:21-31; 1 Cor. 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

4 Feb. 2018 -- 5th of Epiphany

Isaiah 40:21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? {22} It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; {23} who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. {24} Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. {25} To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. {26} Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. {27} Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? {28} Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. {29} He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. {30} Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; {31} but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! {17} For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. {18} What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel. {19} For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. {20} To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. {21} To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. {22} To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. {23} I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Mark 1:29-39

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 on to 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.

It was late in the early evening of an all too eventful day when they began making their way towards the house on the water in the fishing town called Capernaum. Traveling early they had made their way to this home town of some of the disciples. He had already, on this day, spoken in the synagogue, only to be interrupted by a man possessed by an unclean spirit -- who amazingly had known who he was. For hour after hour they had brought people to him for a word, for a touch, for that which they believed only he could give them. Late in the day they had arrived at the home of Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew. He was tired and as the sun settled and another Sabbath began, he looked forward to a meal and some rest. Only it seemed as if that wasn't to be.

As soon as they were in the house Simon's wife came and informed them that her mother was ill. She wasn't sure what was wrong but at the least she had a fever. Fit to be tied that she wasn't feeling well with the new rabbi, they had heard so much about, coming to her house she was beside herself with regret. He needed to be fed and cared for and here she was made to lie in bed. And then that man, that kind man, as weary and hungry as he was came to her bedside -- her bedside-- and with a twinkle in his kind eyes said to her, 'what, a man can't get a meal around here?' and before she could protest he took her hand in his and immediately she felt 20 years younger. Not only was the fever gone, she was truly well.

Getting to her feet and pushing by the big lummoX of a son-in-law Simon, she said, "give us but a moment and you'll be fed!" And in what seemed to be only minutes they were gathered at the table breaking bread. Before they were finished eating one of the children came and whispered to Andrew that there were people in the courtyard who wanted to see 'him.' Andrew's inclination was to send them away. Had he not done enough for one day? But before he could say anything, his friend, his rabbi, his master -- Jesus, was up and by him and taking a seat in the midst of them. And there he stayed until after midnight, blessing, healing, casting our demons... which he would not allow to speak. Finally, when all were seen, they rolled out pallets and laid down under the stars in the open air of the courtyard. Peter lay down, his huge bulk across the threshold, so that Jesus, who was already asleep would not be disturbed.

Soon, only the sounds of exhausted people could be heard. The last thought on Peter's mind before succumbing was, "I wonder if everyday will be like this? How long can he last? So many people. Sp much need."

When the cock crowed at the break of day Andrew was already up stirring the fire. Sleeping until daylight was not a luxury fishermen could afford and habits died hard. James and John were awake soon and a playful nudge made Peter roll over and complain that they had only moments before laid down. Soon all were awake and John went to wake Jesus who had been

given the privacy of sleeping under the stairwell. But he wasn't there. Bathing, John thought, but minutes passed and he was still missing.

They had not heard as Jesus left in the night, deftly stepping around them and then over his great snoring protector. Looking back at them and loving them, he had gone to a quiet place quite close by and was found there after the sun was up. Peter, the slightest touch of aggravation in his voice, said, "Everyone is searching for you." But his reply is neither apology or explanation as he says, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." (pause)

Only a couple of times in the gospel stories are we told that Jesus spoke to a great gathering of people. Most of the time he went from house to house and camp fire to camp fire and occasionally to a synagogue -- preaching, teaching and healing. In between, he educated the disciples in the ways of God and God's kingdom and on many occasions, because he needed to get away, he would be found in a quiet place, before once again off they would go.

It is the way Jesus worked and if you think about it, it is still the way Jesus works. We come to this place to hear in scripture, from the pulpit, in the liturgy and songs what he has to say to us. We gather with him around a table of grace and are fed with and by him even as he touches us and loves us and heals us and encourages us and saves us -- all the while reminding us that after the Sabbath -- tomorrow at the breaking of the day, there are people in the

towns and villages who need to hear the message proclaimed -- who need help in exorcising the demons that keep people, possessed by a myriad of things, from following him. People who need to have their needs attended to, no matter what those needs might be.

Jesus call to us, who would be his followers today, who quite honestly, quite often find ourselves looking for him, seeking him, needing his guidance and direction -- is just as real and just as urgent. There is a world in need of that which only he has to offer and we, you and me, and the church, his body, are for him the living proclamation, are for him the healing touch, are for him the comforting word that cools a fevered brow and makes whole a stream of people who need our help to find him...

It is his way. It has always been his way. He told us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name -- he would be there. First, he comes here to this place, this house, God's house lent to us and he looks lovingly upon us and even in his weariness and our weariness he whispers ancient words of hope and comfort and assurance that, fed at the table of grace, we will rise up ... those of us who wait for the LORD shall renew our strength, we shall mount up with wings like eagles, we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint.

That sounds somehow super human, doesn't it? Run and not be weary. Walk and not faint. If you think about it, it sounds like Jesus. (Pause) But if we follow Jesus, aren't we called be super? And sometimes, like our beloved

Jaguars, we get so close, so very close. But not quite. But we do get close. This afternoon when Family Promise arrives they will walk into a church that's ready and waiting for them. Is every blank on the sign- up sheet filled? No. But we're close. And again, lives of people in need are touched. We may be a bit short of "super" in other areas of the churches life, but worship is as spiritually nourishing as our fellowship. Jesus is present as lessons are learned through Christian nurture and in our pre-school – our classes aren't super filled, but good news is shared. Hard work pays dividends in the care of people and property. We're not super in financial giving but the Holy Spirit works miracles and ministry is done. We're not super evangelist but there is welcome and warmth found in this place. We're not a super church – but we're close. I was pretty skeptical that this morning there would be 2018 food items over there in the Dining Hall on this Souper Bowl Sunday. But In a super effort – there are even more. Hundreds of people will be fed. That's just super!

And we strive like disciples following him from one place to the next to be better. After today, Super Bowl Sunday, after our Sabbath rest, with a super bowl distraction, in a year in which our team was so close to being Super, we'll have to mount up on Eagles wings... Then, we are called to get up on the Monday mornings of our lives -- to rise up to serve him... . It's o.k. if you don't see him.... look for him....pause a minute and pray -- he's close by, on your left or on your right... maybe you'll find him in a quiet place... saying 'come on, let's go...there's work to be done.... We are gathered...we hear his word...we are touched....we are fed..., we go to serve...