Epiphany 5B 2021 The mighty Saviour of us all came to help the needy

Isaiah 40: 21-31 1 Corinthians 9: 16-27 Mark 1: 29-39

Jesus had a busy Sabbath in Capernaum. After preaching in the synagogue and driving out a demon who interrupted the service, he went to Peter’s house and healed his mother-in-law from a fever.

But after sunset **everyone** came to the house. There were about 1500 people living in the fishing village. They brought their sick and the demon possessed to Jesus. Sabbath laws prevented the sick to be carried until the day was over which happened at sundown. The line-ups formed as soon as the sun went down.

There were many that were healed and cured from demons. Many were restored to good health and we would say got their lives back. No illness was beyond his healing. No demon was stronger than Jesus but of necessity had to submit to his authority.

His fame spread as fast as if he were on Facebook. He would give Barack Obama and Justin Bieber a run for their money on Twitter. But that is not why he came. He did not come to make His name great, for His name was always great. He did not come to gain fame or fortune. Nor did he come for the village of Capernaum alone.

For the next morning, after prayer before the sun came up, He said that it was time to go to the neighbouring villages for that is why he came. The easiest way to obtain riches and secure a good life, would have been to stay in Capernaum, let the people come to him and then charge a fee for their cure.

That’s what the disciples thought. That is what we would have advised him to do for we are driven to make the most money by the easiest way possible. It is the way of preserving and enjoying life but it is not the way of the cross. That way of the cross never serves the self but culminates in the painful death of self by execution.

Christ was never driven to the cross but his life so filled with love that he accepted the cross from his father for the people of Capernaum, Cana, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and for all people, of all nations and of all time.

He is the Saviour of all. He did not need to ask for our permission nor did he subject himself to popular opinion of what he should do. He knows better than we what we need. His father knows best when to deliver and in holy love, his help never fails.

He gives strength to the weak, help to the needy and forgiveness to the guilty. Money and fame have no say here. God is not moved by such things. The strong and proud fail to see their need of a Saviour. They neglect the place where Jesus speaks and have no need for his medicine that leads to eternal life. They are happy to maintain their life on their terms and strongly object to bend their knees before God and admit that anything is wrong.

We have herein a warning against hardening the heart against God. We can also easily neglect to hear the Word of God proclaimed to us and feel no sharp need to come to the Lord’s Supper to receive the heavenly bread of eternal life. I fear that the covid lockdown may lead some to continue to miss out on the Saviour’s healing and forgiveness when the church is opened again.

Does that mean that Jesus has stopped to heal and to forgive? Or that His love has dried up and his patience run out? Can He forget his followers or stop praying for them?

The answer is already found in his determination to remain focused on his cross and to keep on doing the will of his father. With that same determination and intensity, he continues to set the captives free and to release all who have fallen under demonic oppression or addiction.

No power or pandemic can empty his promise to care for the needy, to forgive the guilty and to give reason and a purpose to get out of bed and take on the daily tasks. He is Love and his love never fails.

God has promised that all who believe in Him and wait upon Him, shall renew their strength. They will go from strength to strength and rise as if carried up by the wings of eagles. For the way of faith in God’s promises is not a well that could ever run dry but gives life to the fullest in the very presence of God forever.

For the God who made the heavens and the earth and knows each star by name because he put them there, is the same mighty Saviour who keeps his family, the church in the true faith through his word. This is not a paradox but a divine promise. It leads to his kingdom of grace in time and a kingdom of glory after time has ended.

God called Paul to be an apostle and proclaimer of this gospel for all. As Jesus lived and died for all, so Paul was obligated by God to bring that message to both Jew and Gentile, to Greek and barbarian, to rich and poor, to slave and free.

This is why Paul used every bit of his knowledge and experience, his ancestry and his freedom in the Gospel to become all things to all people in order to save some. He never watered down the severity of sin or turned the gospel into a quid pro quo condition on our part. He was under strict orders from God to preach to all and he was overcome by the love of God not to erect any barriers to faith.

Oh that God would grant us the same mind and heart to do the same! For our salvation depends not on us but on Christ only. He will not let anything get in the way of our eternal healing and life with His Father. Now that is a faith to live with and a faith to die by.

O Lord, keep your family the Church continually in the true faith that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.