

"Extraordinary Time"
+ 2 Pentecost B +
Genesis 3:8-15; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35
June 7, 2015

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen. The texts for this morning's message are the lessons for this day.

After last Sunday's glorious celebration of the Trinity with the Mekane Jesus, the fire of Pentecost the week before and the glorious weeks of Easter the church now settles into what is known as "ordinary" time in the church year. I remarked to a clergy friend the other day how odd that while the world moves to Daylight Savings Time from Standard time the largely uninterrupted half of the church calendar where we travel to many hillsides and the shores of Galilee in the Gospels to listen to Jesus teach is called "ordinary." Don't you think the disciples felt their time with Jesus was an "Extraordinary Time" as they heard His words burn in their hearts, witnessed miracles, and came to know and believe that He and the Father were one – that, truly, Jesus was/is/ever shall be the Son of God and Savior of the world? Was anything ever "ordinary" about Jesus?

So don't think that this summer will be a little dull, like watching the grass grow where there is "nothing big is going on." Like children who truly do grow as they sleep especially in these summer months this

“Extraordinary Time” is a time of growth where the Spirit of God fertilizes our faith, scattering Gospel seeds of all sorts. Think of this summer season as a time when God will, through God’s word and in worship connect with you in new and different ways – perhaps bringing about growth in your lives in new and as yet unforeseen ways. You may never be able to exactly pin-point how you’re growing in faith or be able to describe how God’s Spirit grew you in these months, but that’s what the Spirit is up to as you meet God in the Word, in prayer, in the fellowship of believers and seek God’s will.

But I have to admit that the Gospel for today, the “first seed of the summer” is perplexing, a prickly pear of a passage starting with a crowd gathering so closely around Jesus and the disciples that they could not even eat their food as people in the crowd said aloud that Jesus had “gone out of His mind.” What is really awkward is that the people saying these things were those who had known Jesus for years - His hometown crowd. Jesus has gone home to Nazareth, which was maybe not such a smart move as the last time He’d been there and gone to worship on the Sabbath and given His first sermon the Hometown mob had tried to drive Him off a cliff to His death.

Adding insult to injury – or insult to insult, Mark reports that Jesus' own family — His mother, His brothers and His sisters literally "went out to restrain Him (Jesus)." Some preachers have used this text to talk about the blessing and burden of "family" but that kind of misses the point.

Jesus was in trouble – His family was worried He'd lost His mind because He'd healed a man with a crippled hand "on the Sabbath." You see even the healing touch of God's grace – God's very power made evident in Jesus was considered work and all work was forbidden "on the Sabbath." At the time of Jesus the Pharisees had determined that you could walk 4,000 cubits (6,000 ft./2000 yards) each way to the temple or synagogue, or 8,000 cubits total on the Sabbath but you couldn't carry anything with you because that would be work.

So Jesus' healing of the man's crippled hand was simply scandalous – unheard of, unthinkable. Which leads me to a seed to plant in your minds – a seed asking you to be more scandalous in your faith, in your life, in your witness because, you see, all who follow Jesus are a part of His scandalous behavior – loving enemies, praying for those who persecute us, rejoicing in hardship and celebrating in the face of death - being, quite literally, a stumbling block to others and the way they think and act because we don't

do things, we don't think things the way others do – those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior and Lord – whom we are called to witness to in word and in deed. You have been called to a life that is different, sometimes so different that the folks around you, maybe even your families, think they need to "restrain you," because it seems we have "gone out of our minds" in what you are willing to do as you follow Jesus.

Christians have, all of us, "lost our senses." God's Spirit through the Word is training us to God's senses, God's attitudes, God's actions, out of our minds and into God's mind. God is in the business of changing us, transforming us, and if you can't see something spectacular yet, well, just look outside at the grass that's slowly growing and remind yourself to be patient; God doesn't do everything overnight.

Now, back to the "Hometown Welcome" that's not going so well. Some scribes in the crowd (Old Testament lawyers, actually) well versed not merely in the Scriptures, but in every nuance, every wrinkle, every application that scribes before them had come up with, and eager to add their own opinions, offered this about Jesus of Nazareth: "He has Beelzebul (on his side) and by the ruler of demons He casts out demons."

That is, perhaps, the lamest conclusion these scholars could have reached; in fact Jesus pointed out the flaw in their reasoning, but again, backing up a few verses before today's reading, Mark tells us that whenever and wherever "unclean spirits" encountered Jesus, they knew Him and rightly proclaimed Him the "Son of God," after which, each time, Jesus ordered them to be quiet – to be still.

It is rather interesting that in the Gospel, some of the first to recognize Jesus were demons, a scandal to the scribes who judged Jesus Himself to be a demon. But then again, maybe it makes sense that demons would recognize Jesus because He had come to fight them, to engage every evil power afoot in this world and defeat it, including "Beezebul," the very ruler of demons.

You might not know Satan by that but Beezebul is an ancient title, that is translated as "Lord of Manure" only the word is somewhat less polite. Some suggest it can also be translated as "Lord of the Flies," conjuring up the image of flies swarming an animal carcass as well as the book many of us had for required reading in high school. How very odd that Jesus was hated by these Scribes and Pharisees because of the good He did. More challenging to us is that Jesus says the same kinds of anger

against the good we do will happen as we follow Him and make His love known. I believe all of us have had the experience of something we've said or done with the best and most loving intentions, thrown right back at us. That's how it works as you follow the will of God.

For Jesus it meant his mother, brothers and sisters coming to try and restrain Him. His seeming dismissal of their concern has caused many to question His love for the Mary/Joseph relatives or point to some kind of dysfunction in their home but Jesus is simply expanding the concept of family when He says, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." No longer was God's loving will to be shown chiefly in God's relationship with the Children of Israel. The love of God through the indwelling of the Spirit is now for all people of all nations so that all who know Jesus by faith are washed, forgiven, renewed, imperfect vessels this side of heaven but empowered as God's adopted daughters and sons to take the Good News to the ends of the earth!

Throughout the ages of the church by people of every nation and tongue Christians have been messenger/evangelos scattering seeds of the Gospel to be sown seeing acts of love harvested as the Spirit gives the bounty God has in mind. Doing the will of God is not about being perfect

or being always right. Doing the will of God is to believe in the One whom God sent to save us. Imagine that! 2000 years after Jesus walked this earth, God still calls us sons and daughters: family. We who sometimes try to restrain God or are just a bit embarrassed by Jesus, who worry about coming across as "too religious" or "too righteous," Jesus calls us His brothers and sisters. Whatever our faults and our failures, Jesus is not ashamed of us. And for now, let that seed take root in this "Extraordinary Time" in our lives. Amen.

Now may our all-powerful God who in Jesus turned death into life and defeat into victory, increase our faith and trust in the One who has made us His family.