

September 5th, 2021

After Pentecost, 14, b

Isaiah 35; 4-7a; Psalm 146; James 2: 1-17; Mark 7: 24-37

When we are asked to say something about Jesus, what do we often and most usually say? If you asked another Christian what they know about Jesus, what would probably be one of the first, if not the first thing they may say?

“He healed people; he raised people from the dead.” Our gospel today is a good example of that. It contains two healings, one was of the woman’s daughter whom he healed --with the daughter not even being there, and the other was the healing of the man who could not hear or speak, who was brought to Jesus by his neighbors and townspeople.

In neither case, however, did Jesus go purposefully to heal anyone. In the first instance, in fact, he had, kind of behind the scenes, went into a home of a disciple for some respite. The gospel says, “He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there.” But he did not escape notice. In the second instance, he was walking along the Sea of Galilee and a man’s friends heard he was there, went and got their friend and put him in front of Jesus for him to heal.

This leads us to ask the question, was healing and raising people from the dead, the mission of Jesus while He was here on this earth? Remember of course, the people whom he healed got sick again eventually and those He raised from the dead, eventually died.

Healing and raising people from the dead brought Jesus' attention didn't it. It brought people to Him and once he had a crowd --He started talking. Healing and raising people from the dead certainly got people's attention and it was a foot in the door you might say for Jesus to give his real mission to be here on this earth, that is, giving people a new life through Him, resulting in a new life in the world.

Yes, Jesus died on the cross that our sins are forgiven and that we no longer have to pay for those sins, so that now we may live with Him eternally, both now and forever. But Jesus is more than that. Jesus came here on earth, lived here, taught here, died here, was raised from the dead here and ascended from here in order to bring in the first fruits of God's kingdom. We as followers of Jesus, cleansed and made whole through his body and blood, are commissioned to bring in God's kingdom into this world. Jesus' death and resurrection was one piece of His love for us. He also lived, and as He lived, we also are to live.

I bet many of you have now or especially at one point in your life, have a Bible where in the New Testament, each time Jesus spoke, the print was in red. All that red ink was for you and for me.

And you know who has taken that red ink and wrote a whole book related to it? The author of our second lesson, James. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.... What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but did not have works? ...If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is that? So, faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead”

All that red ink of Jesus’ teaching boils down to, “Love your neighbor as yourself” and at one point we read in the gospel of John, Jesus tells His followers to “Love your neighbor as I have loved you.” Yes, Jesus loves us by giving His life for us, but Jesus also shows his love for us by coming down here on earth and living with us, teaching us, eating with us, praying with us, being in relationship with us, all showing us what it means to love our neighbor as He loves us.

Some of us are in a book study led by Carrie Sovola, our Deaconess Intern. The book is titled, “Soul Feast, An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life”. This last week we discussed the chapter, “The

Nature and Practice of Spiritual Reading”. Spiritual reading is relational. It is opening ourselves to how God may be speaking to us....

The purpose for which the scriptures were *written* was to present hearers with God’s Word; and the purpose then of spiritual *reading* is allowing ourselves to be addressed by God’s Word. And that is the simplicity of it as well as the complexity of it, isn’t it? All that red ink is God addressing us through Jesus on what it means to bring God’s Kingdom into our world --through us in the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So today, once again, Jesus gets *our* attention through His healing people. But the red ink of his words goes beyond his healing and goes right into his teaching --and then his teaching goes into our hearts and into our minds –but it’s not finished. From our hearts and our minds, his teaching continues, -now reaching out, reaching out through our mouth, our hands and our feet.

Amen,

Pastor Scales