

Isaiah 40:21-31
Psalm 147:1-11,20c
1 Corinthians 9:16-23
Mark 1:29-39

Sermon February 4th, 2024

Jesus' Love for the Whole World!

In our gospel, we see that there are a lot of people in need of healing in Capernaum. There are a lot of people in need of hearing the gospel. Hearing the good news that someone has finally come to heal and redeem them from their suffering. That someone has finally come to liberate them from oppression. In fact, everyone in the town of Capernaum is lined up at the door waiting for the Sabbath to end so that they can be healed by Jesus. I wouldn't be surprised if Jesus feels like an ER doctor does on the evening of a full moon (**Image One:** a picture of a full ER).

By the end of the evening, Jesus is tired, and in need of some rest to re-energize. So, Jesus heads out on his own to a solitude place to find this rest, and to pray (**Image Two:** someone in a solitude place praying). To discern what is next. Jesus has been in Capernaum for a while now, and has done a lot of good work there.

But, after Jesus takes the necessary time to discern what is next, he comes back to the town to tell his disciples that it is time to move on to the neighbouring towns (**Image Three:** someone on a journey/backpacking it), as they too, have people in need of healing. People in need of hearing the gospel. People who are longing for someone to come and heal and redeem them from their suffering (**Image One**). People who are longing for someone to come and liberate them from oppression.

In response to Jesus' decision, the people in Capernaum struggle to let go. They don't want to see Jesus go, as many are still suffering in their community (**Image One**). Some of them might even feel abandoned by Jesus.

And I don't think it will be easy for Jesus and his disciples to leave them either. Jesus has invested time and energy into this town. Jesus has built and grown relationships with the people.

But if Jesus stays in Capernaum, people from other communities will not get the opportunity to experience this healing (**Image One**). To hear the gospel, the good news that someone has finally come to heal and redeem them from their suffering. That someone has finally come to liberate them from oppression.

Jesus has heard a new calling and needs to go (**Image Three**).

And even though it feels like Jesus is abandoning them, he isn't. Wherever Jesus visits. Wherever Jesus heals and preaches the gospel. Jesus calls and motivates

some in those communities to continue his work. To continue to preach the gospel. To continue to reveal Christ's healing and redeeming love. To continue to give them hope in the Promise that the Messiah has come to liberate them from oppression.

Like Jesus, I have been at All Saints for a while now, and we have done a lot of good work here together. Like Jesus, when I had time to rest over this past year, I prayed, discerned. Listened for God's voice (**Image Two**). Like Jesus, I came out of this discernment, hearing God calling me to a new community.

Like the people of Capernaum, you found out in January that I heard and accepted a call to go to another church in another city (**Image Three**). I know this wasn't easy news to hear for a lot of you. Some of you feel like I am abandoning you. Some of you feel anxious about the future of this church. Some of you are wondering what will happen when I depart in May (**Image One**).

Like Jesus, like his disciples, it wasn't easy for me to get up and go to the neighbouring towns, or in my case, a town across the country. Leaving you here. Knowing that there is still work to be done (**Image One**). It takes a lot of trust from me, your pastor, to believe that I have done enough here for you to keep going. To keep living out your calling as God's people to serve this community, as you await your next leader.

Unfortunately, as we see less and less pastors coming out of seminary, and more and more pastors retiring, we will see more and more churches becoming vacant, in need of a pastor to come and proclaim the gospel through word and sacrament. With this, pastors will not be able to stay as long as they once did in their congregations, as this might alienate other congregations that also need to hear the proclamation of the gospel through word and sacrament. God is calling us more frequently to get up and go into the neighbouring towns (**Image Three**).

But as we prepare for our new journey, remember that as Luther says, "we are the priesthood of all believers." Jesus has equipped you with what you need to keep proclaiming the gospel through word and deed.

And like the people of Capernaum, when I leave, there will be those in this community who will continue to help guide and lead you until you are ready to receive another pastor, another leader, who will walk with you into this unknown future.

And as the early church experienced, when their leaders were called to new places, you are not alone. God has breathed the Holy Spirit on you, and will continue to do great things through you.

Please remember this in this time of transition, and in your time of vacancy.

Let us pray, gracious God help us heal where we are hurting from this transition. Empower us to see that you are walking with us in this time of transition, and will continue to walk with us in our time of vacancy, as we patiently await a new leader.
Amen.

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