

Good morning ST. Johns. And good morning to you Lord. Thank you for your presence here with us today.

So last week we left Jess and the boys after they warded off an evil gang of what Mark refers to as demons. These demons had fully possessed a man. It might be our first reaction to dispute that demon possession even happened or happens or is real. As much science fiction as there is in the world and fiction about evil I wonder if we have so fictionalized evil that we no longer really believe in it. We think of evil as something extreme and frightening at a level that we really can't comprehend its existence. I think that is how the evil of the world creeps into our lives. It comes in, not the extreme but rather in the mundane and works its way up. Small seemingly innocent untruths work their way up to lies and deception, the excuse of kids being kids can offer an unintended permission to bully. When we get into situations where we find ourselves in a

place that is not spiritually peaceful it would do us well to take an inventory of how we are living our daily lives. What is it that is disturbing our spiritual peace. Are the tides of our heart so extreme that there is no calm water where we can be still and know that God is with us. Because indeed, God is with us when our heart's tides overflow and flood and God is with us when our heart's tide is so low that the sand is dry and desolate for as far as we can see. I don't know about you but I can only live in the extremes for so long and then I am exhausted and confused and God's presence seems so far removed from where I am.

So, what do we do about this? We have to have a steady and intentional prayer life and relationship with God, a buoy if you will that helps us keep our spiritual direction in the changing tides. As we navigate the waters of life, Jesus must be our North Star.

Remember that the Bible is not a collection of old stories

that are no longer relevant in our time. The Bible tells us exactly what to do. Let's look at the Mark story. What does Jesus do after his battle with the demons? They go to Pete's house for milk and cookies. Now the Bible doesn't say anything about milk and cookies but it says that they went to Peter's house. Why? Well as we read the story we find out. But first we are reminded about who Jesus is. Now, Peter's mother in law is ill. Jesus does what any Son of God would do. He heals her. And what does she do? She gets up and serves them. "Serve" translates *diakoneo*, most likely indicating food service, and means she "waited on" so presumably she made them something to eat. Now this action on her part is the subject of much discussion. Some have said that it was rude of Jesus to allow her to get up and serve them. They should have let her rest and gotten their own food. It is easy to excuse Jesus with the argument that this is Biblical times, it was a man's world

and so of course she would serve the men, etc, etc. Or, perhaps she felt obligated because she had been healed. but I am not sure that is what is going on here. Peter's mother in law responded to her healing by doing what it was that she was called to do. It restored her. And in that restoration, she became not just a woman whose job was to serve, she became a disciple. She celebrated. She celebrated. Jesus lifted her up, like the angels lifted him up in the wilderness. She was ready to serve just as Jesus was ready to serve.

When God gives us a gift, it is not enough to just say thank you, we are compelled to then use the gift we have been given. In this case, good health and the gift of hospitality. Perhaps another way of looking at this is to say that God doesn't free us from things that are bringing us down or holding us back, God heals us, frees us for something. To do the work that we are called to do.

After some time of rest, Jesus heals many people. When morning comes, he gets up and goes to a quiet place to pray. His friends wake up to find him missing and there are still people that want help. But Jesus is ready to move on.

So, there are some things here for us to pay attention to. First we need to take time to know and use the gifts that God has given us. Second, that we need to take time out and take care of ourselves.

So reach out your hand. Jesus will take it and God will lift you up. When this happens, ask yourself. What am I doing with the life that has been given me? Who does God want me to be? Claim it. Celebrate it. This is who I am. Be it, do it. This is who God wants me to be.

A quotation from Frederick Buechner: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Together now let us celebrate the

call to discipleship. Let us celebrate who it is God created us to be as individuals and as a church. Together let us celebrate and remember what it is that Jesus did for us before during and after the cross.