Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“For this purpose I have come” (Mark 1:38).

Heb 2:14-18; *Mk 1:29-39*

Jesus’ mission to communicate God’s offer of grace continues in today’s gospel passage from Mark. His humanity radiates the glory God intended at creation, and

so Jesus' simple touch and presence resets every distortion in our human nature to its original design and purpose.

As he goes, Jesus extends this restoration in a widening circle of grace, beginning with individual healings, then with exorcisms in synagogues that drive out the distorted spirits that have limited and damaged people's understanding of God's mercy. He moves quickly into outlying villages to liberate people from fear and superstition.

Jesus' encounter with Peter's mother-in-law is significant because it acts as both a healing and a call to service, for he is gathering disciples to help him spread the good news of God's jubilee of forgiveness, freedom and celebration.

This initial burst of grace seems intended to demonstrate that for the new life God wants for us, we must also share and participate in it, for we are agents, not just recipients, of this victory over sin and death. Each healing is also an invitation to extend the miracle to others, to pay it forward like a light kindled and then placed on the candle stand, or like salt and leaven that will permeate everyone and everything they come in contact with.

The revolution of love will continue where it finds willing disciples. Where it meets doubt, cynicism and resistance, it will begin to falter. With each healing, Jesus makes clear that it is the person's faith that is the essential ingredient in the miracle. "Your faith has saved you!" If this is lacking, God's gift is limited, for our freedom is necessary.

It is not long in Mark's gospel before we see skeptics and opponents appear to undermine confidence in Jesus, to sow doubts about his origins, his authority and motives, to suggest that even his miracles are from Satan, not God. The status quo has been threatened, and some in charge do not want things to change.

Don't we hear these same questions and doubts in our own discipleship today? Who are we to imagine that we can influence the course of events in our country? What can one person do to change society? Who really dares stand up to selfishness, greed and dishonesty? Who really believes in miracles these days? Where are the leaders we need before anything can get started?

Jesus is among us and within us, encouraging us to trust the power of grace to take even our smallest effort, within the smallest circle we can actually influence, to begin to change the world. There is only one gospel, and it is happening right here and right now. The lives we read about in the Bible, or the heroes and martyrs in former times and places, are part of history. We are the disciples Jesus is calling today to extend the joy of the God’s grace. If we try, we will see just how powerful this grace can be. But we must try.