**Gospel**: Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. 35In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” 38He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” 39And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

**Message: You Raise Me Up**

“*Don’t tell me you didn’t know! You just weren’t listening! How many times do I have to tell you*?” Do these words bring back childhood memories of your mom’s words or words you may have spoken to your own children? Isaiah’s questions come across a bit more poetically with just a touch of edginess. “Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?” Yet there is also compassionate inflection in these questions. God understands far better than we do the difficulty humans have in believing what cannot be seen, touched, tasted, smelled or heard. Isaiah is writing about the exiles, who are anxious. Is God really with them? Will God see them safely restored to Israel? God understands the spiritual exhaustion the Israelites are experiencing as their Babylonian exile nears the end, and they are about to set out on a long return journey to their homeland. They and we, who are anxious, suffering, lost, drifting, are reminded to “lift up your eyes and see” if you think I, the Lord, do not see you or I, the Lord, do not care about you. Look at all God has created, all the stars in the heavens, all the nations and empires God has raised up and taken down, all the little blessings you have known. The magnitude of God’s creation and attention to detail is always before us. It is absurd to think that God could be careless or incapable. You know and you have heard that “the Lord is the everlasting God.” God and God’s ways cannot be fully known to humans, but just wait; be patient. Trust, and God will help you walk, run and fly with energy and endurance you never knew you had.

God reminds us when life becomes busy, complicated or terrifying, to go outside and look up. Be tranquil, be quiet, be calm; stand amid the Eternal and recognize God’s everlasting sovereignty. There are those who can make that work for them for a lifetime, but most of us, including the ancient Israelites, have our weak moments when we question God’s involvement in daily living and especially during times of crisis, when all that can be seen is tedium or turmoil. Spiritual fatigue sets in. We cannot see where or how God is acting. We cannot understand why events are transpiring as they are. We cannot see God. We **are** human and cannot comprehend the totality of the depths and breadth of God, because the Creator and the Creator’s understanding are unsearchable for humans.

Unsearchable is an odd word in this context. We **can** search. Look at all the images of space science has amassed since early telescopes, the mammoth observatories, Hubble and Webb telescopes. Microscopes and electron microscopes allow scientists to glimpse the teeny tiny, **but** there is still **much** that is not fully known or understood. Naturalists and ecologists continue to probe the mysteries of nature. Medicine continues to research the mysteries of physical and mental health. These and many other accomplishments may lead some to the hubris of their own abilities, while others recognize the presence of God in their discoveries and are justly overwhelmed with and awed by the intricacies of God’s creation. There is so much in the cosmos and in the *Beyond* that cannot be revealed to humans because it is beyond our human ability to comprehend; but, God has provided some understanding and insight for humans through Jesus, who is the fullness of God, and all of God that **can** be disclosed to our understanding. Trying to see Good is like trying to see all of Lake Ontario from Sodus Bay or all of the ocean from any bay. Jesus does not instantly reveal all of what we can know of God and God’s purpose either, but we get in the boat and join the journey. God is revealed in Jesus over time. We **do** know, because it has been told, that Jesus **was** in the beginning. At this point in Mark’s gospel, the 4 fishermen did not know that about Jesus, but they were at a beginning.

After Sabbath worship, five men enter Simon’s house. I know what it’s like to have a bunch of men come into the house, or a bunch of teenage boys hanging about. Jessie, you’ve fed the 5000 during Christmas tree season. Imagine if you are not feeling up to snuff, or are really out of sorts with this fever, and five men come into your house not knowing what had just occurred in the synagogue. (I do wonder where the daughter—Peter’s wife—was. Were there children to care for her?) The otherness of Jesus is beginning to register with the men, and they tell him of her illness. Jesus immediately goes to her: one of God’s children is not whole.

It is still the Sabbath, and two events occurred that violated Sabbath laws: Jesus healed the woman, and she served them. Scripture/Mark doesn’t indicate that Jesus said anything. He did not command an evil spirit to come out of her or forgive her her sin, which was common thought in that culture as to what caused illness. He simply took her hand and lifted her up. (Larry and I had to lift his mother on numerous occasions. It wasn’t pretty, often involving both of us using all our strength or, on one occasion, dragging her to a chair.) I picture Jesus taking this woman’s hand, looking her in the eye, gently supporting her by her elbow as she rose to her feet, and stabilizing her until she had regained her balance. Jesus does this for us.

There is a lot of publicity these days about protecting yourself from what may be considered “inappropriate” touching. If you must hug, the sideways hug or burp-the-baby hug, but sometimes we need a full-on bear hug. When we end a conversation, we might say, “We’ll keep in touch.” Kind, compassionate touch, a presence that can be felt, is affirming. Touch indicates presence and awareness within a person and a community. Humans are created to live in community, one that builds up and supports. Touch something solid, to be in touch, is the reason for the incarnation. God wants to be seen. God wants to be heard. God wants to be known. God wants to be loved. God wants us to feel his Presence. God is known, seen, heard, and felt through Jesus Christ—the incarnation of God’s love. Jesus showed us, and continues to show us how to love, in order for us to grow in God and learn to trust God more and more. Love **not** expressed, love **not** felt makes it difficult to trust. Jesus, God’s love made flesh, restored this woman to wholeness—physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness. That is salvation.

She in turn **chose** to serve them. She was NOT doing the domestic chore that was expected of women. She **chose** to serve Jesus, to engage in a Messianic ministry of feeding and offering kindness over the sacredness of Sabbath law. She served to build up others, perhaps even those who came to the house that evening by nourishing their bodies for the days ahead. At the very least she offered space and opportunity for others to hear Jesus, to be healed by Jesus. She paid it forward.

Jesus knew his source of strength and power. Time alone with God in a deserted place free from distraction, restores and replenishes health and wholeness. Simon, Andrew, James and John came looking for him. “Everyone is searching for you.” Are we **all** searching for Jesus? Are we **all** searching for God? Perhaps at some unrecognized level, all **are** searching; just not sure what they’re searching for. Rather than remaining in Capurnaum, Jesus said, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns [to] proclaim the message.” How will people know? How will people hear, if we do not proclaim and live and enact the Love of God in Jesus Christ throughout the neighboring towns? Those who wait in the Lord, to serve the Lord, to proclaim the Lord will be strengthened to rise to any occasion on eagles’ wings, to run and not be weary. It **is** a demanding thought, even a bit scary, that as you go through your life, you might be, for some, the only Jesus they’ll ever meet. Jesus, raise us up to love and serve. The Lord be with you. Amen.

**Prayers of the Peopl**e: Loving God, we come to you trusting you and your salvation. You, who deliver us from dangers and walk with us in times of trial, continue to heal those who suffer, encourage those who serve, give endurance to and protect all who walk among the wolves. Guide us in all we do that we may serve you in all honesty and integrity to the glory of your holy name, through Christ our Savior. Amen.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**: Generous God, from you comes every good and perfect gift. We give you thanks and praise for all your mercies. Your goodness created us, your bounty sustains us, your patience bears with us, your love redeems us. Bless these gifts we offer to you and our lives as we go into the mission fields for your service. Amen.

**Benediction**: Wait for the Lord in confidence, and He shall renew your strength; mount up with wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and do not faint. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, go in God’s grace to love and serve the Lord.

**Old Testament**: Isaiah 40:21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; 23who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. 24Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. 25To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. 26Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

27Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”? 28Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. 30Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; 31but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

**New Testament**: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! 17For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. 18What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel. For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. 20To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. 21To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. 22To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. 23I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessing