

You've heard the readings for the day. You've sung the hymns. Now you've settled into the pew and await some sort of a word from your rector. Well, this Sunday, I would much rather be out there where you are, and have someone else here in the pulpit.

I always have things to say, don't get me wrong, but this week, with so many deaths of our friends, I'm just feeling a little overwhelmed. So, I take a deep breath and read the scriptures for today and hope that God's word will give me strength. And here's what jumped out at me:

"Have you not known? Have you not heard?" It's the theme of our Isaiah passage, and is repeated twice.

God is saying to us, "here I am in the midst of all that is going on." **"The Lord is the everlasting God He does not faint or grow weary. Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength."**

Mark's Gospel then gives us the example of Jesus healing Simon Peter's mother. Jesus heals many in his ministry. Some have made jokes about how Simon's mother is healed and then immediately gets to work. But this is Mark's Gospel. Mark's is the Gospel of "immediately." And this mother who was healed is joyous, and grateful. She is expressing her gratitude and readiness for service by doing what she knows best...getting back to work. She doesn't just want to serve lunch. She wants to serve God's kingdom. You and I know that feeling and that belief. We want to serve God in this world and in this community.

We haven't had many funerals here at Trinity in the last couple of years...thank heavens...but this last month has been a bad season. I attended Richard Carley's funeral last week, tomorrow is Kathy Wohlfert's funeral, and next Saturday there will be a memorial service here for Josh Link, the son of Fritz and Lee Link of Sharon and NYC.

A wedding or a funeral is always an opportunity to tell people the Good News. To help people understand that despite the changes and chances of life, even in the face of illness and death, we have hope, and healing and life, today, and in the world to come. Jesus has told us this, and Jesus has shown us this.

God says to those people who are grieving; **"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is everlasting. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless."**

God is the God of hope and health and strength. People who will be sitting where you are tomorrow morning may have a hard time believing that God is the God of hope and health. Why did Kathy have to die if God saves and heals...healings like we heard of in Mark's Gospel today. Miraculous healings.

What many of us **have** heard and known is how much sadness there is in this world. How many are dying of the flu this season. How much bad news do we hear and see and read. Whether it's about

our government, or ongoing war in Afghanistan, or threats of war from North Korea. Where is the Good News of hope and healing?

It's there in our scripture, and it's there in our lives too when we take the time to see how much love, and beauty abounds in our lives. Yes, it's darned cold out, and the ice and snow causes accidents as we know, but aren't we blessed to live in a part of this world that is so beautiful. And God has given us everything we have.

Jesus healed many in his days on earth, the Spirit of God heals many now. Maybe we need to focus on seeing what God has done, rather than lamenting that God hasn't done everything that we wish. There have been some miracles of survival in this flu season too. There have been miracles in our own lives. Some miracles are grand, and some are small, and when we remember those times I hope we have a renewed sense of all that God has done for us.

I read recently about a woman named Debbie who has wanted so much to be a mother and instead has had 6 miscarriages. She feels that God has forgotten her. She attends church and has prayed and prayed for a healthy baby. People who have told her that this is all part of God's plan, or God is building your character by allowing this, and the worst, "You don't have enough faith."ⁱ Certainly there are some stories of Jesus healing people because they had such great faith. But in the Gospel reading today nothing is mentioned about faith. Jesus does what he is able. Debbie has found that despite her sadness that she sees that God may not control her reproductive system, God has made a difference in her life by bringing loving people to her and giving her hope.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? God's great power gives us strength to keep on our course, to see the beauty and love in the world that God created . God also gives us times of rest and renewal as Jesus demonstrates. **We shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint.**

ⁱ "Living by the Word," *The Christian Century*, January 17, 2018. Pg. 16.