

A Sermon for 9th Sunday after Pentecost

July 21, 2024



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Click Here for today's Readings:

[Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Ephesians 2:11-22, Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Give me Jesus

According to our Gospel reading from Mark, Jesus and his disciples have achieved a lot of notoriety. They can't seem to go anywhere without a big crowd showing up. Jesus suggests to his followers that they go to a deserted place and rest for a while. They were so busy they didn't even have time to eat. So they get in a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, and when they arrive at the other side, the people are already there – Mark writes, “the people hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.” Jesus looks upon the people with great compassion, comparing them to sheep without a shepherd, and he teaches them many things. Thereafter Jesus and his disciples attempt to get in the boat and get away again, and sure enough, the crowd recognizes him and, says Mark, they “rushed about the whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.” The people are desperate. They want Jesus. At the very least, they want to touch the fringe on his cloak, for that too could heal them.

Jesus and the disciples are a little too popular! And the need of their healing touch is so great. There is a scene in the movie “Jesus Christ Superstar” where Jesus goes to a deserted place to pray, in a rocky place. And pretty soon people start climbing out of the rocks. This musical Jesus looks at them in horror and yells; “Heal yourselves!”

I think what was demonstrated is compassion fatigue. Some of you have described this to me, that the cares of your lives are exhausting you as you try to care for your loved ones. You would never yell “Heal yourselves!” and neither would Jesus. But the cares of the world can indeed seem to be too much. So, I have compassion for Jesus and his followers in this scripture passage, and for all of you who extend yourself for others. You are certainly taking this care upon yourselves willingly and offering your love and energy where it is needed most. You probably call upon Jesus, too, to help those who are afflicted, to help you take care of others.

So there are two sides to this great need for healing. One side is the exhausted caregivers, and the exhausted healers, Jesus and his disciples. The other side is the desperate hope of those who need healing.

The letter to the Ephesians speaks of loss and divisions, which we certainly see today in our country. We all have a desperate longing to be healed at all levels – nationally, internationally, in the church, in our lives. The people seeking desperately for Jesus, just to touch the hem of his robe, are actually showing great faith – they know the source of their faith and healing.

At the Winter Convocation our diocese held in February, this desperate longing was expressed artistically and with great fervor, by a soprano singing the great spiritual, Give me Jesus. She sang slowly, in an operatic high range, and kept about 300 listeners totally captivated. We could hear the longing in her voice and in the words.

In your bulletins is an insert of this famous spiritual. Most spirituals come out of the slave experience and reflect the desperation of the slaves' lives. This one seems to cover the turning points in our lives. Let's have a look. It centers on morning, midnight, and impending death. The words are simple and are a cry from the heart. There is a curious phrase in the refrain: "You may have all this world." I take this to mean that the things of this world are not important, only Jesus is.

Perhaps you know the tune and can join me in singing it. We may not sound as professional as that soprano at Convocation, but really what matters is our fervor, our feeling. Let's sing it slowly, so that we can think about the words, think about those who were so desperate to touch Jesus in his day, and how we too want his presence in our own day..

*In the morning when I rise, in the morning when I rise,
in the morning when I rise, Give me Jesus.*

*Refrain: Give me Jesus, give me Jesus
You may have all this world, Give me Jesus.*

*Dark midnight was my cry, Dark midnight was my cry,
Dark midnight was my cry, Give me Jesus. (Refrain)*

*O when I come to die, O when I come to die,
O when I come to die, Give me Jesus (Refrain).*