

Mark 2:1-12
February 19, '12

“THROUGH THE ROOF”

I DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE THE IDEA OF OFFERING AN APOLOGY FOR SOMETHING IN A SERMON – AND APOLOGIZING FOR AN *ENTIRE* SERMON IS EVEN LESS APPEALING.

WHenever I think of offering an apology for preaching, I'm reminded of the story – true story by the way – of a young preacher who stood in the pulpit one Sunday morning and, with tears in his eyes, looked at the congregation & said, “*I'M SORRY – THE HOLY SPIRIT DIDN'T GIVE ME A SERMON THIS WEEK!*”

YOU CAN HAVE ALL KINDS OF FUN WITH THAT, CAN'T YOU?

YOU MIGHT CONSIDER IT THE ULTIMATE IN “*PASSING THE BUCK.*”

YOU CAN ALSO HAVE FUN IMAGINING THE REACTION OF THE CONGREGATION.

BEGINNING A SERMON WITH AN APOLOGY IS DANGEROUS BUSINESS.

YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS GOING, DON'T YOU?

WELL, NO – IT'S NOT *THAT* KIND OF APOLOGY.

MY APOLOGY THIS MORNING IS MORE TO THOSE WHO MAY FEEL LEFT OUT BY THE FOCUS OF THE SERMON.

YOU SEE, I DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE THE IDEA OF APOLOGIZING FOR A SERMON BUT NEITHER DO I LIKE THE THOUGHT OF PREACHING A SERMON THAT SPEAKS ONLY TO PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH.

I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT MOST SERMONS INCLUDE SOMETHING THOUGHT-PROVOKING OR CHALLENGING OR INSPIRATIONAL TO ANYONE WHO'S LISTENING.

I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT SOMEONE WALKING IN OFF THE STREET WITH NO BACKGROUND IN FAITH WHATSOEVER, MIGHT LEAVE FEELING AS THOUGH THEIR EXPERIENCE IN WORSHIP WAS TIME WELL-SPENT.

THUS, I OFFER AN APOLOGY FOR TODAY'S SERMON TO THOSE WHO MIGHT FALL INTO THAT CATEGORY – THOSE WHO AREN'T PART OF THE CHURCH - BECAUSE THIS SERMON IS GOING TO BE ADDRESSED SPECIFICALLY TO THE CHURCH.

WHILE IT'S OBVIOUSLY NOT THE ONLY WAY TO LOOK AT THIS PASSAGE, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF IT THAT OFFER A VERY PROFOUND & CHALLENGING MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH & TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE A PART OF IT.

I THINK THE FIRST THING TO NOTICE IS ITS CONNECTION TO WHERE WE'VE BEEN RECENTLY – THAT IS, IF YOU'VE BEEN HERE IN WORSHIP OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

AND, YOU SEE, THAT'S THE FIRST PLACE WHERE SOMEONE MIGHT FEEL LEFT OUT THIS MORNING.

AS A REMINDER TO THOSE WHO *HAVE* BEEN HERE & AN INTRODUCTION FOR THOSE WHO *HAVEN'T*, WE'VE BEEN LOOKING AT THE BEGINNING OF MARK'S GOSPEL.

WE SAW JESUS CALL THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

WE SAW HIM AS HE PREACHED IN THE SYNAGOGUE & DROVE OUT A DEMON FROM A POSSESSED MAN.

WE SAW HIM GO TO PETER'S HOUSE IN CAPERNAUM, WHERE HE HEALED PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER OF AN ILLNESS & THEN HEAL ALL MANNER OF ILLNESS IN OTHERS.

WE WATCHED AS JESUS LEFT PETER'S HOUSE EARLY THE NEXT MORNING & ANNOUNCE TO THE DISCIPLES THAT THEY WERE GOING TO BE TRAVELING TO OTHER CITIES & VILLAGES.

LAST WEEK, WE SAW HIM HEAL A LEPER.

AND HERE, MARK'S SECOND CHAPTER OPENS WITH JESUS COMING BACK TO CAPERNAUM – BACK, APPARENTLY, TO PETER'S HOUSE.

DO YOU THINK HE TRIED TO COME IN QUIETLY – PERHAPS EVEN THE WAY HE HAD LEFT – UNDER THE CLOAK OF DARKNESS?

IT DIDN'T REALLY MATTER BECAUSE SOMEHOW THE WORD STILL GOT OUT.

ISN'T IT INTERESTING THAT THE MERE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE HOUSE FILLS IT WITH MORE PEOPLE THAN THAT HOUSE CAN HOLD!

WHAT'S INTERESTING IN TERMS OF ITS RELEVANCE TO TODAY & TODAY'S CHURCH IS THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY SINGLE CHURCH OF EVERY DENOMINATION & PERSUASION IS TRYING EVERYTHING IMAGINABLE TO COME UP WITH THE MAGIC BULLET THAT WILL GET PEOPLE INSIDE ITS DOORS.

HERE'S JESUS – TRYING *NOT* TO BE NOTICED – TRYING *NOT* TO DRAW A CROWD – AND YET THE HOUSE IS FILLED TO OVERFLOWING!

I THINK THERE ARE TWO THINGS THAT ARE INSTRUCTIVE HERE.

FIRST OF ALL, IT WAS SIMPLY THE PRESENCE OF JESUS THAT DREW PEOPLE TO THAT HOUSE.

THEY KNEW THEY WOULD FIND HIM THERE & BECAUSE HE WAS TO BE FOUND THERE, THEY CAME WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN.

THINK OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT FOR TODAY'S CHURCH.

I DON'T THINK WE GIVE PEOPLE ENOUGH CREDIT.

WHAT I MEAN BY THAT IS THAT WE THINK WE HAVE TO OFFER THEM A GIMMICK – A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE & SOCIALLY EXCITING REASON TO BE HERE.

LET'S FACE IT.

THE WORLD OFFERS A GAZILLION SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE & SOCIALLY EXCITING REASONS TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE & DOING SOMETHING ELSE.

WHAT THE WORLD *DOESN'T* OFFER THEM IS THE ONE THING THAT WE HAVE – AND THAT'S JESUS.

FOR THE PEOPLE OF CAPERNAUM, THEY KNEW THAT SIMPLY BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS WOULD CHANGE THEIR LIVES.

I DON'T THINK PEOPLE ARE ANY DIFFERENT TODAY.

THERE IS A SPIRITUAL HUNGER THAT EXISTS WITHIN PEOPLE'S LIVES TODAY – A HUNGER THAT CAN ONLY BE SATISFIED BY BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS.

IT IS HERE, MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE, THAT THAT PRESENCE IS FOUND.

WE'VE BEEN CELEBRATING OUR YOUTH TODAY.

THERE'S AN INTERESTING ASPECT & HISTORY TO OUR YOUTH PROGRAM THAT SPEAKS TO THIS.

SOME OF YOU MAY WONDER, AS YOU LOOK AT THE SUNDAY NIGHT CALENDAR, WHAT THE ORIGIN OF THE 6:31 STARTING TIME IS FOR OUR YOUTH GROUP.

THERE ARE TWO THEORIES ABOUT THAT.

ONE THEORY SAYS THAT THE TIME IS BASED ON MARK 6:31.

THAT VERSE READS, "...*(JESUS) SAID TO THEM, 'COME WITH ME BY YOURSELVES TO A QUIET PLACE & GET SOME REST.'*"

THE THOUGHT IS THAT BOTH THE MEETING TIME AS WELL AS THE NAME OF OUR YOUTH FACILITY – *THE PLACE* – ARE BASED ON THAT VERSE.

THERE'S ANOTHER THEORY, THOUGH, THAT SAYS THE ORIGIN OF THE STARTING TIME IS FROM LUKE 6:31, A VERSE WHICH IS VERY FAMILIAR TO ALL OF US – "*DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU*" – A VERSE WE KNOW AS "THE GOLDEN RULE."

NOW "THE GOLDEN RULE" SEEMS TO BE A PRETTY GOOD BASIS FOR A YOUTH PROGRAM BUT IT DOESN'T ADDRESS THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME "THE PLACE."

HERE'S HOW ONE PERSON REMEMBERS THAT HAPPENING:

"WHEN WE RENOVATED THE YOUTH ROOM, IT ENDED UP LOOKING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM HOW IT HAD EVER LOOKED BEFORE.

DURING THE MONTHS OF THE RENOVATION, AS WE WERE WORKING ON IT, WE KNEW WE WANTED TO GIVE IT A NEW NAME.

WE KEPT SAYING THINGS LIKE 'WHAT SHOULD WE CALL THE PLACE?' AND 'THE PLACE WHERE THE YOUTH MEET DOESN'T HAVE A NAME YET.'

WE REFERRED TO IT IN THAT WAY FOR SO LONG, IT JUST BECAME THE NAME OF IT BUT WE STILL WANTED SOMETHING THAT HAD SOME BIBLICAL OR SPIRITUAL MEANING.

WE TOLD SOMEONE IN THE CHURCH THAT WE WERE CALLING IT 'THE PLACE' & HE SAID, 'WOW! WHAT A GREAT NAME FOR A YOUTH MEETING ROOM!'

WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HE MEANT & ASKED HIM TO EXPLAIN.

HE SAID, 'WELL, FROM THE WORDS OF JESUS IN THE UPPER ROOM – 'YOU KNOW THE PLACE WHERE I AM GOING, THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO.'

THE PLACE IS WHERE JESUS CAN BE MET.'"

DOESN'T THAT MAKE IT A GREAT NAME FOR A YOUTH FACILITY!?

WHAT THAT FURTHER SAYS TO US IS THAT THE ENTIRE CHURCH CAN BE "THE PLACE" BECAUSE IT'S HERE – MORE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE – THAT WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET JESUS.

THAT'S THE FIRST THING THIS PASSAGE CAN TEACH US IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH.

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE INSTRUCTIVE ABOUT IT, THOUGH, AS WE SEE THE PEOPLE CROWDING INTO THAT HOUSE EVEN AS JESUS TRIES TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE.

HE COULDN'T DO IT BECAUSE WORD OF MOUTH BROUGHT THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY THERE.

ONE PERSON TOLD ANOTHER PERSON WHO TOLD ANOTHER PERSON & EACH ONE OF THEM TOLD IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT EVERYONE WANTED TO BE THERE!

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU TOLD SOMEONE WHERE THEY COULD MEET JESUS?

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU INVITED SOMEONE TO JOIN YOU HERE – IN THE ONE PLACE MORE THAN ANY OTHER, WHERE THEIR SPIRITUAL HUNGER CAN BE SATISFIED?

FRIDAY NIGHT, WE HAD 31 MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH HERE AT CHURCH.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY OF THEM ARE PART OF THIS CHURCH FAMILY?

6. THAT'S RIGHT – 6.

THAT MEANS THAT EACH OF THOSE SIX TEEN-AGERS AVERAGED MORE THAN 5 GUESTS APIECE!

AND I THINK WE CAN BE PRETTY CONFIDENT THAT MANY OF THEM WILL BE BACK.

THEY'LL BE BACK BECAUSE THEY EXPERIENCED SOMETHING PRETTY SPECIAL HERE.

YOU SEE, THIS PASSAGE JUST BEGS TO BE HEARD BY THE CHURCH!

AND WHAT ABOUT THESE FOUR FRIENDS OF THE PARALYZED MAN?

LOOK AT HOW CREATIVE & DETERMINED THEY WERE TO BRING THEIR FRIEND INTO THE PRESENCE OF JESUS!

LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING.

WHEN YOU THINK OF THE PHRASE "THROUGH THE ROOF," WHAT DIRECTION DO YOU THINK OF?

LET ME HELP YOU OUT – "GAS PRICES WENT THROUGH THE ROOF," "MORTGAGE FORECLOSURES WENT THROUGH THE ROOF," "WHEN I TOLD DAD I GOT A "D" ON MY TEST, HE WENT THROUGH THE ROOF!"

THE GAS PRICES, THE MORTGAGE FORECLOSURES & DAD ALL WENT UP, DIDN'T THEY?

ORDINARILY, WHEN WE THINK OF SOMETHING GOING "THROUGH THE ROOF," WE ENVISION IT GOING UP.

BUT HERE, IN THIS STORY, IT'S THE OPPOSITE, ISN'T IT?

THESE FOUR MEN COULDN'T GET INSIDE BECAUSE OF ALL THE PEOPLE, SO THEY CLIMBED THE OUTSIDE STAIRS TO THE TOP OF THE HOUSE & LOWERED THE MAN "THROUGH THE ROOF," – DOWN TO WHERE JESUS WAS.

WHAT A FASCINATING IMAGE THAT PRESENTS!

WE DON'T HAVE TO GO UP TO REACH & MEET GOD.

WE DON'T HAVE TO ASCEND TO LOFTY THEOLOGICAL MOUNTAIN PEAKS.

WE DON'T HAVE TO SOAR INTO THE SKIES ON SOME INTELLECTUAL AIRPLANE.

WE DON'T HAVE TO CLIMB UP A PHILOSOPHICAL STAIRCASE.

SOMETIMES – IN FACT, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT – JESUS IS FOUND IN THE DIRT & GRIME OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

THAT'S WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE "INCARNATION."

IT MEANS THAT GOD DOESN'T MAKE US REACH "UP" FOR HIM BECAUSE HE COMES "DOWN" TO US.
SO, AGAIN, TO THOSE WHO MAY BE HERE FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME OR TO THOSE WHO REALLY HAVE
NO BACKGROUND IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, I APOLOGIZE FOR TODAY'S SERMON THAT FOCUSED MORE ON
CHURCH PEOPLE.

BUT, THEN AGAIN, MAYBE IT DIDN'T.

MAYBE IT DIDN'T BECAUSE IF YOU – PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME – HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT
THIS IS A PLACE TO MEET JESUS – THIS IS THE PLACE TO HAVE YOUR SPIRITUAL HUNGER SATISFIED, THEN I GUESS
IT WASN'T JUST FOR CHURCH PEOPLE.

AND I HOPE THE REALIZATION THAT YOU REALLY CAN MEET JESUS HERE IS A REALIZATION THAT JUST
SENDS YOU THROUGH THE ROOF – WHICHEVER WAY YOU GO. AMEN.

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