

Job Shadow Jesus (3)

(2 Kings 5:1-14; **Mark 1:40-45**)

10:30 am, Sunday, February 12, 2012; Windsor UBC; J G White

This past week a pastor and professor named Arthur Boers gave some lectures in Wolfville. He tells his story of making a religious pilgrimage: walking the famous *Camino de Santiago* in Spain, an 800 km walk to a cathedral that has been a Christian pilgrimage site for many hundreds of years.

Boers tells many stories from his 800 km spiritual pilgrimage. A busy, driven man, he got walking farther and faster every day. He found other people who were walking 40 km a day. “Why can't I?” So he did it too.

Until his blisters caught up with him, and the local doctor told him he had to slow down, after taking one day off from walking. So, he slowed his pace down. A few weeks later, nearing the end of the pilgrimage, he started speeding up again. This time, he got tendonitis, which slowed him down. It was his own fault. Though he was going on pilgrimage as a spiritual discipline, for his own spiritual growth and edification, he did not always follow good advice or common sense as he tried to do it. His path to healing in the soul taught him some lessons on healing of the body.

For most of the past week I thought I was going to focus upon Jesus' healing ministry, and have us look into that here and now. Then I became focused on what Jesus does and does not do in each story of healing or exorcism. I started to wonder at the things Jesus said or did not say in each event Mark describes for us. Usually Jesus heals. Sometimes He forgives. Usually He tells the person to be quiet about what has happened. Sometimes He tell the person to share the news of the blessing. Then I noticed how the people healed or *exorcised* responded to what the Messiah prescribed. Some did not obey His guidance at all.

So, wander with me through Mark – just through Mark's Gospel. Let's ponder what we can be learning from the Master when it comes to His miraculous work of healing and setting people free. And see what the helped people do.

In Mark chapter 1 we read of Jesus casting an unclean spirit out of a man, raising a woman from her fevered sickbed up, and

now cleansing a man with a skin disease. Jeanette just read this last bit. Did you notice what the healed man is told to do, and what he does? Jesus sternly warned him not to tell people, and that he must go and do the usual religious offerings and prayers that are prescribed in the Bible. Leviticus 14 tells all about this procedure. It included an inspection by a priest, the sacrifice of a small bird and a lamb, an offering of grain, and the shaving and bathing of the man healed, twice in the course of eight days, among other rituals. For a poor person there was an optional, somewhat cheaper procedure.

What does the healed man do? He goes around and tells everyone, and no mention is made of fulfilling the Jewish worship traditions that Jesus prescribed.

We humans sometimes have an aversion to following someone else's plan. Even when we are asking for help. Even when it is God's plan for us. The classic story Tracy read, of the healing of Naaman, is a case in point. Naaman sought healing, but he did not want to follow the prescription when he got it from Elisha. He does go though with the washing ceremony, and finds healing, but it was hard on his ego to go through with it.

Why is it so hard to follow through with the healing plan? How often are people given an antibiotic and told they must take *all* the pills over the next ten days, but they don't? How often does the doctor say, 'no heavy lifting,' and the patient soon disregards the order? How often does a pastor preach 'love your enemies and pray good things for those against you,' but we soon start grumbling against them?

In the case of this guy healed of leprosy in Mark 1, it is after the blessing that he does not follow through. We see a variety of responses as the stories progress.

In Mark 5 a man set free from a legion of demons is told to tell his friends what the Lord had done for him, and he does this.

At the end of Mark 7 Jesus heals a deaf man, and orders the people there not to tell others; but, as Mark puts it, "the more He ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it."

In Mark 9 Jesus heals an epileptic child, after His disciples were unable to do so. Exasperated, Jesus says, "faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you?" Once the

boy is well, Jesus' disciples privately asked Him why they were not successful. Jesus tells them “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

God's intervention in people's troubled lives is clearly not simple. It is personal and specific on each occasion. And the Lord has to be very patient with people, who do not want to cooperate with the healing path, or do not want to obey afterwards, or simply don't quite understand.

As we job shadow Jesus on His mission of healing and exorcisms, we learn that there is no simple formula: step one, step two, step three, every time. And there is no assurance that the people helped will follow Jesus' guidance.

To *seek* healing, of body or soul, of relationships or religion, is one matter. But to be on the healing team, as a disciple and helper of the Saviour and Great Physician, is another. To talk of job shadowing Jesus is really about being part of the healing team. So I'd like to stay with that, needy as we are for healing and forgiveness, ourselves. For to set people free from evil and free from illness is part of the mission: our calling, our purpose.

We can expect today just what Jesus found back then. People who are helped may be grateful, or not. They may do as we suggest, or disobey. They will speak about our ministry in whatever ways they want, not how we want. They may understand God's ways, or misunderstand.

Upon each person, the Lord has compassion, shows pity, looks on with love. And it seems that in many cases, though Jesus could guess or know if the person would later obey or not, He heals them anyway. He forgives them, nevertheless. He sets them free, no matter what they will choose to do with their lives in their blessed freedom.

There once was a man who changed his plan. He'd been born in Kentville, and grew up to be a bricklayer like his father. He did a bit of study at Acadia University, and in his youth was converted to Christianity – and Baptist Christianity at that. He felt a call to ministry and started serving Churches. He was serving churches as a pastor, but he began to gain a vision for people outside of the congregations. Especially, he was interested in our first nations people; he learned their language.

He actually became a language scholar, and mastered Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Mohawk, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Latin and Greek.

He traveled all over Nova Scotia, as well as New Brunswick and PEI, and spent more and more time with the Mi'kmaq. His approach to the first nations people seems to me amazing. He befriended them. He respected them. He was an advocate for them. In one of his lectures he exclaimed:

Shame on us! We invade the territory of men, made like ourselves, and fashioned in the image of God; bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh – we treat them as though they had no rights. We seize upon their country. We rob them of their lands. We drive them from their homes. We plunder them of all they hold dear and sacred; we deceive and defraud them – we violate the most solemn treaties made with them; we impoverish, degrade, despise and abuse them.

He was also a scholar, working very hard with their language, for their sakes. At one point he wrote: *Day after day, week after week, month after month, wear away, and all I can say is, I have inserted so many words in the Micmac Dictionary. And when I rise at midnight, from my task, with my head and breast aching, and kneel down and pray for forgiveness, and for a blessing on the dull, monotonous labour of the past day, it is sometimes, I confess, no easy matter to realise what connection all this has with the salvation of the souls of the Indians.*

He respected their traditional legends about Glooscap so much that he saw to their publication. But he was a local Baptist missionary to these first people of our province. He sought to share the evangelical faith in Jesus Christ with these amazing people. At the end of his long life, he was awarded honorary degrees from Queen's University and King's College.

This man's name was Silas Rand, and he was our Pastor here in the 1840s. He died in 1889 and is buried in Hantsport, which had been his home for many years. An amazing man of amazing ministry and methods. Yet what is his legacy? I know of no Baptist churches in the Maritimes that are filled with first nations people. There is no Glooscap Baptist Church, or Eskasoni Baptist Church, or Millbrook Baptist Church.

There is something amazing about Silas Rand and his life, and yet it is not amazing because of the usual evangelical success we idolize. The people Rand loved and lived for never became evangelical Christians in large numbers. Seems that the Catholics kept them in their fold. But, somehow, Rand was profoundly faithful to God and God's mission, and loving of the first nations people. How they responded in the long run was not up to Rand or to God, it was up to them.

At times, we will be part of the ministry of helping people respond to their needs, and respond to their blessings. We also must be ready for people to do what they want with whatever happens. Our advice, our suggestion, our instruction may seem to land on deaf ears. We learn from our Master to point the way, but then let people do as they wish. Plenty of people did not follow Jesus' every suggestions; and He sometimes had to change His own plans then. The same may happen to us. We might have a great plan to help someone or other, but when they don't follow it we will have to find our own plan B, or C, or D.

We have, posted in our house, this modern proverb that is titled, *The Paradox of Change*. "You cannot change someone else's behaviour, you can only change your own. But, to change someone else's behaviour, simply change your own." *This* is what we can do. Find our path with Jesus as our Master. Allow others to respond. It seems to be the way of the Master.

Praise God, that ours is a God of the second chance, a God of patience, a God who can move on to plan B, and C, and D. From our Master we will learn how to do the same.

Let us pray.