

5th Sunday of the Year B

*Praise the Lord for he is good;
he heals the broken-hearted,
he binds up all their wounds. (Ps 146:1.3)*



First Reading

Job 7:1-4.6-7

Job began to speak: Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service, his time no better than hired drudgery? Like the slave, sighing for the shade, or the workman with no thought but his wages, months of delusion I have assigned to me, nothing for my own but nights of grief. Lying in bed I wonder, "When will it be day?" Risen I think, "How slowly evening comes!" Restlessly I fret till twilight falls. Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed, and vanished, leaving no hope behind. Remember that my life is but a breath, and that my eyes will never again see joy.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 9:16-19.22-23

I do not boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it! If I had chosen this work myself, I might have been paid for it, but as I have not, it is a responsibility which has been put into my hands. Do you know, what my reward is? It is this: in my preaching, to be able to offer the Good News free, and not insist on the rights which the gospel gives me.

So though I am not a slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could. For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost; and I still do this, for the sake of the gospel, to have a share in its blessings.

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straightaway. He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was.

In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said: "Everybody is looking for you." He answered, "Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came." And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils.

Meditation

Mark is interested in the link between the miraculous activity of the messiah and the awakening of faith. Faith leads people to ask Jesus for healing. Healing leads them to the total commitment of faith.

The cure of Peter's mother-in-law suggests more than Christ's extraordinary power over a sick body. In a clipped account, Mark demonstrates his interest in the meaning of the event: the healing of bodies is aimed at wholeness of spirits. This same narrative implies a model for every believer. Made whole by the power of Jesus, we too must devote our full energy to serving the Lord.

This model is not easy. Enthusiasm for miraculous cures is not enough. All the crippled and possessed of Capernaum crowd in front of Simon and Andrew's house because they see Jesus only as a wonderworker. Jesus slips away. He takes refuge in solitude and prayer, to search out the real meaning of his mission. He is first of all the sower gone out to spread the Word. His word more than his miracles must move us.