

Is Everyone Searching? 5 Epiphany B

What are we hungry for? What are people talking about? Pizza for the Super Bowl sounds good. Maybe later we'll try some popcorn. The sights, the sounds, the smells, the glitz and glamour of commercials and the roar of a crowd attract people. There was an attraction that day in Capernaum when Jesus led worship. There was authority in his voice because he knew what he was talking about. Jesus drew a crowd.

Teaching in the synagogue was fairly predictable. Predictable that is, until a stranger comes into the meeting and starts shouting at the teacher. Jesus handled the interruption extremely well. He silenced the demons and freed the one possessed.

Jesus broke with tradition. There were certain things one did not do on the Sabbath in Jewish religious life. You could only walk a half mile each way. You did no work and you certainly would not dare have a party even if there were such a thing as Super Bowl. Serving food, cooking, grocery shopping all had to be done ahead of Sabbath day. Even if there was a need to do good, the deed had to wait until

sundown. Jesus didn't wait. After teaching and exorcising the stranger he left the synagogue.

Simon Peter was obviously married. He had a mother-in-law and like all good sons you took care of both mothers in your life. At least if you were smart! Simon Peter's mother-in-law was sick and had a fever. People in ancient Israel did not have the herbs to always heal. Aspirin was not known. When you have a teacher like Jesus with the personal power to cast out demons and heal the sick, you give him a chance at your mother-in-law. Who knows, maybe they'll get a home cooked meal out of her!

And it happened...she was cured! And she fed them! Well, at this point if you have any hope of having a private party...forget it. The word gets out that there is a new teacher in town and he is one that makes things happen even on the Sabbath. The crowds come and the party gets crashed. Bye-bye Super Bowl. Maybe next year!

Why did the crowds come? For what were they searching?

Remember, Jesus had already proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was near. Jesus had declared the Reign of God and God was declaring spiritual warfare against the kingdom of evil. Light was shining its spotlight on darkness. And Jesus was in command. He

would not allow the forces of darkness reveal who he is. The works and the words would speak for themselves. As people are scratching their heads and wondering what is going on in small town Capernaum some already may be thinking “Is this the one we’ve been searching for?”

Hope. Feed a person’s hope that there is a better life waiting and he will come, see and hear. Hope is the “not yet” we long in our hearts to know. Hope keeps us working against all odds even in the face of everyday experiences of evil and utter despair. Hope was born that day in Capernaum for here at last is someone who gives us what we can’t get from the old ways. Jesus, you are a breath of fresh air! You don’t give dead traditions you give us life!

To life! To life! L’chaim! L’chaim! L’chaim! To Life! So sung the Fiddler on the Roof. And that fiddler’s name is Jesus and he’s trying to fiddle his way into Janesville and into our lives with fresh air!

What are people hungry for? They want to believe again that God is near; they want to see that God is near and they want to be touched by the hand of God. For those three things: believe, see and feel, people will hunt and fish until they get what they need.

It's no wonder Jesus was hunted. The whole city is gathered at Simon's house. What a party! Jesus spends all night healing and delivering the town from disease and demonic control. Here's the kingdom of God, at last! It really is here. Simon and his family had never seen so many transformed and touched by the hand of God.

Jesus must have been wiped out, drained from a day of ministry like that. But to see so many people helped must have been moving. It's easy to get caught up in excitement and movements and business but these things too can distract us from what is truly important.

Jesus takes the morning off to pray. A practice I admit often falls by the wayside. And when one is not prayed up and plugged in the Spirit of God there's trouble. When one does not take time to hear God's voice to direct him, then deafness takes over. Weakness and spiritual liability can become the ruin of a person if one is not waiting in prayer for God's voice.

Jesus seeks a deserted place. And in darkness he prays. "In the morning Lord, you hear my voice; early in the morning I make my appeal and watch for you," as the psalmist writes. (Ps. 5:3). Meanwhile, the people are hunting for Jesus. But who really is hunting? Who truly is searching? "Behold, I stand at the

door and knock, and whoever hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...to him and he with me, and we will dine together.” (Rev. 3:20) as John records Jesus words in Revelation.

Simon says to Jesus, “Everyone is searching for you.” Jesus replies in response knowing they would make him a king, they would worship him, they would try to possess him and take him home resists the temptation. That’s not what Jesus is about. Jesus is not about to stay in Capernaum and become their mascot. Jesus is not theirs alone. Jesus, God’s Messiah, their Messiah and our Christ, belongs to the world.

Jesus leaves and takes all those who will follow to the next town. Not all have heard this message and seen God’s kingdom first hand. Many have yet to believe. Many have yet to be saved from sin and death, from evil and injustice. Jesus is in command. He’s building an army of one: One Lord, one faith, one baptism to go with him into Janesville. And his command post could be right here at Trinity church! Come Lord Jesus! Come! Amen.