

# THE EMMAUS SERIES

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year B

Job 7:1-4, 6-7

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

Mark 1:29-39

### ***Let us go elsewhere, so that I can preach there too, because that is why I came***

Concluding the introductory section of Mark's gospel, today's reading further clarifies the nature of the mission Jesus means to share with his disciples. As we have seen, the healings and deliverance performed by Jesus are part of his preaching of the Kingdom, signs that God will triumph over all the forces of evil in the world. This is brought out by Mark, as he recalls and contrasts two moments of healing.

There are practically no details in the gospels of the family circumstances of the apostles. The account of the curing of Peter's mother-in-law is therefore remarkable. It is generally accepted that Mark composed his gospel in Rome about the time of Peter's martyrdom. If this is true, Peter's telling of the story of Jesus would have been an important source of his material. In this incident we may well hear echoes of Peter's voice describing a sequence of events. Peter brings Jesus from the synagogue to his home for a meal; they are surprised to find the old lady ill with fever; Jesus heals her instantly by taking her hand and helping her up; fully recovered she gives herself to the service of the Lord.

As we have seen, 'Who is this man?' is the subtext of Mark's narrative. There is no doubt that Jesus worked miracles. Miracles, as we all know, have an unhealthy fascination for many people. Mark is concerned that his readers are not carried away by the fact that Jesus was a wonder worker. They must understand that the miracles of Jesus were signs inviting faith in the coming of God's salvation into the world. True faith in the Saviour will come, in the end, to understand that the greatest wonder in the life of Jesus of Nazareth was the salvation he brought to the world as its crucified Saviour. Thus, as Mark's narrative continues, we hear echoes of how Peter began to learn this lesson at the end of the eventful Sabbath Mark has described.

By evening, word had spread that there is a miracle worker in town. People came crowding around Peter's door, bringing their sick and 'possessed' for healing. Jesus responded to their appeals; but in his silencing of the 'devils who knew who he was' we are reminded that these people still have to learn who he is. In the morning there was consternation when Peter and his companions find that Jesus was nowhere to be found. 'Everyone is looking for you', they protest, disappointed that he has not made the most of this instant notoriety. Later they will recognise that Jesus was concerned to lead the people beyond the wonders he worked to a renewed faith in the coming of God's Kingdom – the great theme of the solitary prayer he shared with his Father. This could only be achieved by his preaching the message of the Kingdom. And so the ministry he was about to undertake 'all through Galilee' would combine his 'preaching' and his 'casting out devils'.

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