

# "Preaching"

Isaiah 40:21-31 & Mark 1:29-39

February 5, 2012

I read a cute little story about a father who took his young son in to town one day to run some errands. When lunchtime arrived, the two of them went to a local diner for a sandwich. The father sat down on one of the stools at the counter and lifted the boy up to the seat beside him. They ordered lunch, and when the waiter brought the food, the father said, "Son, we'll just have a silent prayer today." They bowed their heads. The father got through praying first and waited for the boy to finish his prayer, but he just sat with his head bowed for an unusually long time. When he finally looked up, his father asked him, "What in the world were you praying about all that time?" With the innocence and honesty of a child, he replied, "How do I know? It was a silent prayer."

Well, it is a big day for prayer and for preaching. How folks will pray and for what they will pray will take as many forms as the preaching of the day. Although I did not hear it myself, I was told that Madonna commented that she had the opportunity to preach for 8 minutes today to a congregation of nearly a billion people. Advertisers during the Super Bowl are shelling out millions of dollars for the opportunity to preach their message in the form of 30 second commercials. And you, .... You gather here this morning and give me the great honor of your time and attention through the course of this hour to preach and pray without the investment of millions or the time constraints of 8 minutes. Thank you.

Jesus has really just begun His ministry in our Gospel text today. He has just come out of the regular worship gathering at the synagogue. Peter's wife's mother has been sick at home and Jesus went with the disciples to her home after church, took her by the hand and raised her up. The fever left her and she set immediately to the task of setting out the coffee {serving them}. Word spreads around the small community and many are brought for healing and to be touched by Jesus. It is an incredible day. And as it comes to an end, Jesus has to be tired. But in the early morning hours He goes to pray - perhaps it was a silent prayer because we have no hint concerning the nature of the prayer. When the disciples find Him they are anxious for Him to get back to town because the people are excited and want to see more of Jesus and His healing miracles. I have retold this text to get to this simple point. Jesus responds to the request by saying that it is time to move on. He has a mission. And the mission is to preach. 'This is what I came out to do,' He says. I came out to preach - to share the message.

It seems as though almost everyone wants to preach something to someone. Everywhere we can hear the message that someone wants us to hear. I don't know what message Madonna wants to get across ... I can not for the life of me figure that one out. I know that the advertisers will be preaching the message that we need their product and our lives will be so much better with it than they are without it. Infants will tell you how to make money with e-Trade and we will laugh at the thought of 'speed dating' in the nursery. We will be

told what car will survive the end of the earth and thus which to buy. And we will learn what soft drink should be the drink of all people - and they are willing to spend 7 million dollars for 60 seconds to tell you that. Turn on the news after the game in this political year we are hearing so much more preaching about who and what is evil, about who can save us and who will destroy us. Yes, there is a lot of preaching going on today. But Jesus simply takes us by the hand and raises us up.

This early in the Gospel of Mark - still in chapter one, we don't have a lot to go one in regards to what it is that Jesus wants to preach. Still He says clearly how important it is, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns so that I can proclaim the message there also.' The only hint that we have from earlier in the chapter when we are told that Jesus begins proclaiming the 'good news of God'. "The kingdom of God has come near - repent - believe the good news." {Verses 14-15}

What do you need to hear in the preaching today? Jesus is on the move going out to the neighboring towns proclaiming good news. Will we hear it amid all of the other preaching?

The Apostle Paul talks about how critical preaching is to him. In fact it is moving to me to hear him say that it is not only important to him but that he feels as though he simply has no choice - he must preach - he must share the good news .... He simply can not, not preach .... he feels as though an obligation has been laid on him and he simply must speak the good news.

We can hear how important sharing the message is with both the Apostle Paul and with Jesus. But it is the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah who just gets into it - straight and to the point! "Have you not heard ..... ???"

Listen, people .... as though you have never heard it before. Quite apart from all of those who will tell you what you need and you who should trust, there is but one God.

*<sup>21</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard?*

*Has it not been told you from the beginning?*

*Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?*

*<sup>22</sup>It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,*

*and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; .....*

*<sup>28</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard?*

*The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

*<sup>29</sup>He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.*

*<sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary,*

*and the young will fall exhausted;*

*<sup>31</sup>but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength* This we proclaim. This is the promise of God. I suspect that what is true today is true for everyday - there are a lot of voices calling us to hear and accept their message. We can not believe them all. Some will not have the ability to save us like they claim. Will we hear the good news? Who's preaching will you buy today? A word that will only point to the troubles of the world and who is to blame ..... a word that will tell you what you need to find sheer happiness ..... or a word concerning a God who creates and reaches down to lift up the weary? There is a cathedral in Milan, Italy that has 3 doorways at the entrance to the building. Over one door there is carved a beautiful wreath of roses with these words inscribed underneath, "**All that which pleases is but for a moment.**" Over a second door is sculptured a cross, and there are the words, "**All that which troubles us is but for a moment.**" But underneath the great central entrance to the main aisle is the inscription, "**That only is important which is eternal.**" The Lord is an everlasting God ... Have you not heard? Put your trust in Him.

*AMEN*