

“Need A Lift...about now?”

Rev. Karen S. Hagen

The Gospel of Mary 4: 1b-1; Mark 1: 29-39; 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13

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Paul is not like a slick politician putting on different faces to persuade different people...two-faced we call it today, saying what someone wants to hear in order to get them to come on board...

that is a modern take on the story as we hear it through 21st Century cynical ears. That's not it at all.

Paul's interest is in sharing the gospel...the word of hope made real offering real ways to respond to the life you have.

The Christian movement provides, and so he wants to share, a vision of peace and wholeness radically different than the one the world offers.

This peace within invites us to address our true need rather than get caught up covering up or latching on to what is not life-giving nor sustainable.

As the Blessed One says to the disciples: Peace is within us. The Child of Humanity within honors our real and individual needs within the needs of our gathered humanity.

This is the new non-violent, just realm Jesus invites us to live.
We are made humans in this. Don't doubt it. Be sheltered in it.
Turn your heart to the Good
and explore the teachings of Jesus for your very life.
Live a love relationship with humanity.

And even while we are much more alike than different...know some of us are getting our needs met and others are not.

Those whose needs are not addressed feel they are often left with only one course of action: reacting, trying to get to the front of the line, often angry and only feeling in solidarity with those who are also angry.

So this makes Paul's example of how to live in the ways of Jesus even more poignant. To live peace, we are called to meet folks right where they are rather than where we want them to be.

To come alongside to see the need at hand and what is most needed now. Lowering the temp by honoring real people and their need.

It's freeing. It is a freedom from stereotypes surrounding others, a freedom that brings you new insights and the courage to come alongside the very ones and issues you don't understand and so probably fear.

You find the blessing Paul talks about...grace - a deep belonging that offers do-overs. You are made able to extend that grace to others.

You feel the power in everyone's belonging. You find the courage to give yourself to the new realm.

When we open to receive grace and understanding...
when we find the Child of Humanity within us,
we receive the very healing we most need as
we make healing possible for others.

Now, words alone would never make someone believe this could be true. Words alone have never made you believe anything, have they?

Belief takes personal connection, experience to make it real, relationship. Faith is relational.

Actually, no one can be convinced of anything unless they already want to be convinced...can't hear you unless they are already coming toward you..

Paul shares the gospel by coming alongside those he meets using words only when necessary...he becomes like them...is one with them... sees the world through their eyes...honors their values and need... and shares as is appropriate....one size does not fit all.

This reminds me a few weeks ago when we shared that you have to be willing to begin before you are ready...before you really know what to do. It is when you come alongside someone in need, that you will know what to do next. When we start to weave, the Divine provides the thread.

Paul "weaves" via his presence and actions, not words. This is his living form of evangelism...which is not about church membership but about sharing the good news. May this evangelism also be ours!

God/Jesus/Paul focus us to act in ways that build up a justice for all...that addresses real needs and resists false divides and violence in all its forms. And one size does not fit all. There are a variety of needs.

And you cannot know the justice most needed if you don't know the one who needs it. Of course, that means we have to get out of our bubble and comfort zone. In this pandemic we still

need to be doing that...

it may be virtual but it needs to be actual!

Paul comes up alongside and shares this good news:

God meets you where you are. Paul comes to know by relationship what is the underlying need to be faced. We are then to name it. And what is the quality of being required in order to address it? Hope? Courage? Power? Tenderness? Righteous Anger? Stamina to resist?

God meets you there and I...well, "let me help you" embody it.

It is only when we all come together to deeply know each other, addressing our individual and common needs, that the new realm is sustained.

Can you feel how different this is?

Coming alongside and deeply knowing folks vs. using faith talk to convince someone of a fixed life?

Faith talk like: God never gives you more... Just believe. God will intervene if it's God's will.

Feels empty. But this technique of convincing with words is often an approach used by those religious and political.

It feels a sweet talk, coating problems with words, or downplaying realities as if things really aren't so bad or there is a quick fix...

sorta' saying buck up or get over it or come out fighting literally!

It may soothe for a while but nothing changes unless we do.

And often what happens is people who are ignored or sugar coated, react. Desperately falling for the faulty thinking that the ends justify any means.

Jesus, Wisdom Teacher....also demonstrates the wisdom to come alongside but goes one step farther. He goes to Simon's mother-in-law and he comes alongside her and he reaches out his hand and takes hers and lifts her up.

I would say lifts her body and spirit. She was lifted up, felt seen, heals in a way that prompts her to serve with them...as one lifted, healed...with a different viewpoint, vantage point.

Living in healed ways to help others.

Want to be made well? Need a lift?

When was the last time you needed a "lift"?

The kids and I spoke of that this week...being sick, what was it that truly lifted us making us well. It wasn't the medicine. It was people.

I remember when I was in 7th grade and very sick with ear infections. I can remember the pain and lying in my mom and dad's bed in a darkened room trying to sleep so I wouldn't feel it.

Then I realized that someone was gently massaging my temples and brushing the side of my head with their hand. My grandpa, my dad's dad, had come in the room and all he did was sit there caressing my pain. He never said a word. I am not sure he ever even knew I knew he was there.

That one loving act lifted me and touched my life in ways he could never have imagined. In that moment I discovered love is not boastful and needs no reward (like Paul), that it is enough just to come along side and be with someone...in fact, it is everything.

I learned that the healing that came to me through his unselfish act of oneness with me was far more dramatic than the physical cure that soon came about the ear infections.

Do you have an experience like this...when someone came along side of you? How has your life been lifted by such an experience?

Have you experienced the difference between healing and cure?

Need a lift? Relationship lifts...love lifts. Love lifted me.
Love can lift you. You can lift others. You can lift yourself!

Need a lift? Need a fix?

If all you get is a quick fix, then you haven't been lifted at all.

No healing happens. You'll get sick again...figuratively.

You know how you can tell the difference between healing and quick fix?

Look at how you are serving? Has there been a shift in you, a healing, that nudges you to reach out differently to those around you?

Do you feel compelled to come alongside to know others more deeply?

And in knowing each other, build up relationship and see each other's needs and blessings, changing the world?

Sometimes I have seen it work the other way around too...being with others may just begin to lift/heal what ails you.

If you build up relationships...why your life just might get lifted!

A true healing touches us, lifts us, in such a way that we are propelled out into the world differently. We long to serve...to come along side of others in meaningful, powerful ways. And so, *we* are even furthered...healed!

And one more insight from Jesus response to the immense need he saw around him.

He models for us a simple reality: in the midst of much need,

we need to care for ourselves by going to a deserted place and praying...
to be sure we are getting things in a right order.

Saving ourselves from ourselves. And sometimes the world from us.

You, like Him, are not to get distracted or bogged down or stuck doing what you are not called to do...no matter how enticing.

Reflect on what is thing most needed now. The needs are great,
how shall we be most effective in helping others get their needs met.

We are more than bodies and a current situation.

We are more than spirits alone.

Body and Spirit are one and powerful.

There is peace within inviting us to honor our needs,
come alongside others in need and live the faith with them...
invited to rest, pray, and reassess where the need is greatest now.

What is the lift you need?

How is God coming along side you offering you relief and wholeness?

Will you crack your life open to allow some grace to come in?

In what ways are you now healer, enabled to serve in ways you could never have imagined were possible before?

The gospel in two words: LOVE RELATIONSHIP

...coming along side without false expectations, with few words,
offering a hand, appreciating others just as they are,
freeing us to see things differently, to live in new ways.

The world changes when you come alongside others in their real lives
and real needs...living the good news together!

Love lifts. Love lifted me. Love lifted me.

When nothing else could help, love lifted me.

I am free indeed. Love lifted me.

I am enough. The light is with me. I am beloved.

You are beloved.