



In this Lutheran school there was a boy who as my grandmother would say was full of the dickens. He was always causing trouble. His 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher didn't know what to do with him. Finally she sent him to the principles office. The principle knew of the troubles he had caused his teacher and the class and he knew all the things the teacher had done to try and modify his behavior. He decided to take a different tact.

Jonny he said to the boy would didn't look too phased by being sent to the principles office. Jonny where is Jesus. Jonning got a shocked look on his face. He never expected this question. Again the principal asked Jonny where is Jesus? Where is Jesus?

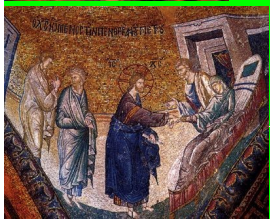
When Jonny arrived home the usually tough kid that no one could get to went crying to his mother. What's the matter Jonny. She was scared, never had she seen him so upset. What's the matter?

Jonny said. Someone took Jesus and they are trying to pin it on me.



This is the season of epiphany. We are called to look for the light of Christ that shines in this dark world. But sometimes it is very hard to see.

In our reading from the gospel of Mark Jesus doesn't seem to make things easy for those who are looking for that light. In this reading Jesus seems to do a lot of things wrong.



It begins with Jesus healing Peter's mother-in law. No I'm on going into a mother in law joke.

Jesus touches a woman who is not his wife. He touches a sick person and he heals her on the Sabbath the day you are not suppose to work.



Not only that, the woman gets up and prepares food for them - something a Jewish woman is not suppose to do on the Sabbath. I know these things don't bother you. We don't follow those rules and laws. But they were the accepted rules for Jewish people in his day. The religious people of the day were not happy.



Later that night after sundown which marks the beginning of a new day for the Jews, people brought friends and family who were sick or possess by demons to Jesus. Jesus heals many of them but doesn't let the demons talk because they know who he is. We are not sure why he doesn't let them speak maybe it doesn't look good if a demon is speaking up for you. Or maybe it just isn't time for people to really know who and what Jesus is. So the Demons aren't happy.

You might not see right now why I've said that Jesus does things wrong. But stay with me.

In the morning while there are still sick people and demon possessed people who haven't been cured, remember it says he healed many, it doesn't say he cured all. While some are still needing healing Jesus slips away.

Jesus takes a break, goes to a deserted place and prays. Well I guess we can understand that Jesus needs a break. He is human after all. But does he? He is also divine he is God.

Now we get a little nervous. Simon finds Jesus. Everyone is searching for you. We expect Jesus to say ok, let's go help them. Instead Jesus says. The Super bowl will be on soon I don't want to miss the beginning they're going to have some great commercials. "It's all there in the original Greek".

No but seriously, Simon says everyone is searching for you. We expect Jesus to turn and help more people, instead he says lets go to the neighboring towns. I've got to tell them the good news too.

I'm sure we have all had this kind of experience and frustration.

Many of us have been blessed to have seen or heard of God's miracles in this world, many, many kinds of miracles.



Zapata, Colorado

- Extraordinary miracles like cancerous masses that just disappear.
- Medical procedures that don't have much hope succeeding in unexplained ways.

- Babies born to couples who have exhausted all medical options.
- People who have survived terrible tragedies against all odds.
- Relationships restored.
- Lives changed.

And on and on.

We've seen the miracle of people sharing of themselves where you can't help but see the hand of God.

But we have also experienced times when God doesn't seem to be present. This person was healed but what about that person. The person who doesn't seem to deserve the bless gets it while a apparently more deserving goes without.

It is normal to look for reasons why God acts the way God does or doesn't act the way we think God should.

In our reading it says that everyone is searching for Jesus. On the face of this we wonder. Isn't that what God wants of us? Doesn't Jesus want us to search for him? Maybe the question is why

are they searching? Are they searching so that they can turn their life over to him? Or are they searching because they've heard about him and they want something from him.

In Matthew's gospel after Jesus worked a miracle and feed the 5,000 people were searching after him to make him king. They wanted to make him King so that he could fill there bellies.

It's easier to look at the stories in the bibles and make judgments of people and their motives, partly because they are not around to defend themselves.

Our struggle and our call to faith is to live a life where sometimes Jesus acts to way we expect, in a way that makes sense to us and sometimes Jesus acts or doesn't act in ways that make no sense to us.

Our challenge and hopefully our comfort is to remember who is God. Remember who is God and trust him no matter what happens.

Where is Jesus? What is Jesus doing now? I must say I don't always know. But I do know that He is your God, He loves you and he is worthy of your trust.  
And all God's people said, Amen.

February 19, 2006

It was a quiet Monday morning. Pastor Anderson was looking over the newspaper when his old friend Simon came in with a couple of cinnamon rolls and a couple of cups of coffee.

Thought you could use a little break before you started workin today.

Thanks Simon you're one in a million. (By the way this is an excellent way to start the week, bringing cinnamon rolls for your pastor).

PA: Let me just go and wash my hands.

*After he left the phone rang.* Simon picked it up. O Hello Valborg. Yes he's workin today he be right... O sure I'll give him a message. But,,, But.. O alright I'll tell him.

*PA walks in.* Good bye. Who was that PA asked.

Valborg said Simon. I'm suppose to tell you that She wants Milly Tompson off the prayer list.

That's strange. Did Milly ask her to call.

No she said that Milly has been on the list for two months and Valborg feels she should be taken off now. I can't believe someone would call to take someone else off the list.

Oh, you'd be surprised. But you have to understand. Valborg is a prayer warrior. She prays for everyone on that list every day. But she like some others, get tired and frustrated when nothing seems to be getting any better.

So you're taking Milly off?

Oh no. But it does take a lot of faith to keep praying for the long haul. I forgot we have some napkins in the kitchen. I'll get some.

*As soon as PA leaves the phone rings.* Last Lutheran Church. No PA is working he just stepped.. Sure I'll tell him. Oh, wow. Ya that's tough. I don't know, I'll have him call you.

*PA walk in,* Again.

Yup, that was Gertrude. She couldn't talk right now she is off to the hospital. Her neighbor was in an accident.

Was that why the helicopter came in and out last night?

Maybe. Anyway she doesn't know what to do. She wants to pray for her neighbor's recovery but her neighbor isn't a Christian. She doesn't think she is anything. That's tough. It's bad enough when a Christian needs prayer but an unbeliever? But doesn't it say somewhere in the bible that Jesus healed someone because of their friends faith.

Simon last week we had that reading from Mark. I preached on it and you were right there.

Yeah but I had the grandkids. *He says with a smile.* That's right the grandkids. You know how crazy they can be. Hard to handle.

Yeah college kids are like that. Anyway, there were these guys who carried their friend, a paralytic to Jesus.

He couldn't walk right?

Right.

See I heard that.

Well do you remember that they couldn't get close to Jesus because of the crowds? So they had to carry him onto the roof. And they lowered him through the roof to get to Jesus.

They did? No I'm just messin with you. I remember. They went to a lot of trouble for their friend.

That's right. And it says that Jesus heals the paralytic not because of his faith but because of the faith of his friends.

What about the paralytic's faith.

You mean before? Yeah.

We don't know it must not have been important.

But he believed afterwards?

I would think so.

Hey that kind of relates to those too phone calls. The men who carried their friend all over the place up and down shows us to keep on prayin.

And the fact that Jesus healed him because of his friend's faith should comfort Gertrude.

Simon maybe you should be a pastor.

Nay, my job is more important. Who else is gonna pick up the garbage. You're right it would really stink if you didn't do your job.

One of the things that Jesus teaches us today is that he will honor our faith when we carry the cares of others to him for help. That is a great encouragement. Because we are not always sure that those we bring to Jesus have great faith or any faith. It's also encouraging to us to know that God sees our faith when we keep the faith and don't give up hope. God sees our faith when we hold on when it is very difficult to keep on carrying another to him. The situations might be difficult, the person we are trying to help might even be uncooperative.

So hold on in faith, in good times and bad. Is it very difficult to keep the faith sometimes? Yes. But Jesus sees and understands.