

Introduction to themes for the season and the day

The season of epiphany draws to a close and we see the many ways God self-reveals. Scripture recounts how God and Jesus intervene in very public settings...and today we see that God also shows up for individuals, right in their own households. Consider the invitation to recall how God has shown up for you...even in times that were scary, sad, and uncertain.

Gospel

Mark 1:29-39

29As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.

Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. 35In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Sermon

Let's return to with Jesus and Simon, Andrew, James and John to Simon Peter's home where his mother-in-law lies ill with fever; one that's potentially fatal:

“29As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.”

Simon's mother-in-law is too ill to take part in community and too frail to carry out her role in the home as 'chief hospitality officer'.

On this day, as people come home from synagogue, Jesus sees her—this one person—fevered, fatigued and frail. He takes her hand and lifts her up. Mark tells this story using the same word for 'lifted up' that's used to describe Jesus' resurrection. In that very personal moment between Jesus and Simon's mother-in-law, scripture is fulfilled. “They who wait on the Lord shall have their strength renewed”. A promise made to a whole nation some 800 years before is fulfilled for one person.

You might sense a pattern at work-Jesus heals individuals like the person at synagogue and Simon's mother-in-law. Even as we might wish someone speak the given name of this woman whose house is now overrun by the whole village, Jesus' scope of ministry expands to encompass an entire region. Jesus' one to one ministry becomes part of God's bid to restore all things...all things...each thing...every thing...every one-

Back to the invitation to reflect and imagine the ways God shows up for each of us: “Who's tired?”

People lugging all their possessions in trash bags, walking our streets in search of food and shelter must surely be tired.

Volunteers at places like Open Arms Mission and Port Cares, are exhausted knowing the need for food is increasing every day even as the resources dwindle.

Kids are tired of going to bed hungry

Kids in other parts of the world are tired of bombs falling, killing their friends, their families, their neighbours and destroying their homes.

Teenagers are worn from their lives displayed on social media even while dealing with their own individual struggles.

Women preachers I know are tired of being told to tolerate bullying, to accept the barriers to being called to senior pastors positions and being paid less than their male counter parts.

LGBTQ youth and adults are tired of rejection and discrimination and holier than thous telling them who they should be and whom they should love.

Maybe we can relate to a well-known preacher in the Black church who says, “We’re done” Done with the injustice, done with the violence, done with feeling hopeless, just done...can’t take another bit of it. This same preacher says, we might be done, but God is NOT done.

We remember Isaiah’s words today—written as one empire topples and another takes its place. Maybe life will improve, peace will arrive—dare we

dream for shalom? “They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength”.

We who are tired wait...May the God who creates and liberates show up find us where we are. May Jesus find us too, take us by the hand and lift us up. When the fever breaks and strength returns, may we might lift up others. As God continues to lift us up may we remain hopeful God is not done blessing and saving the world.