

Epiphany V

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 neighboring 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.

You could've blown me over with a feather the first time I sat on my uncle's lap at age 7 and watched Episode 6 as the mask of the villain Darth Vader was finally removed. I had been wondering what was underneath for months! I had to know! OR! Or...if you know the secret, but know that it cannot yet be revealed, you sweat it the other way. Every time Spiderman has just been beaten up and lay unconscious on the floor with his mask blowing up, up, up—revealing his mouth, then his upper lip, and you think, "NO!!! they can't know it's Peter Parker yet!!" Epiphany is a season filled with expectation. Hidden things revealed. Darth Vader's mask removed. That same uncle owned a metal detector, which might as well be an Epiphany Symbol. The expectation that came—the overwhelming hope and even anxiety that came when the beep would alert us to a treasure beneath! Exhilarating! That's Epiphany! We have found Jesus! Jesus is now fully present in his power and glory among the people, and they're filled with tremendous hope. Disciples are suddenly willing to drop everything and follow him. Centurions are walking long distances to see him and ask of him. Really old women are seeking him out in crowds to touch his garments. This is the happiest part of the Bible—large groups of people whose needs are being met, whose lives are being enlightened by the Gospel, suddenly the very dust that has long clung to their feet is filled with hope—he might even spit in it and put it on someone's eyes for healing. Christ is revealed! With reference to that last point—that the very dust is pregnant with expectation that Christ will be revealed, I mean that. Sometimes we read the Scriptures as if they are a Spielberg script—Jesus, at the mythic Jordan river, his hair blowing in the wind as if he's just walked out of a Peter Jackson film. Jesus, with muscles flexed, fighting the devil the Galilean wilderness. That's mostly not helpful. I'd much rather you see Jesus showing brilliant glory in very ordinary things. Jesus.....the friend. The glorious friend. Jesus.....who invites people to spend the afternoon with him. The glorious host. Jesus.....who allows his cousin to pour water on his

head. Glorious baptism. Christ is revealed in ordinary things in Scripture. Christ is revealed in ordinary things in your life. Our sense of the supernatural is at its height when you get excited about a little bit of bread and a little bit of wine giving you eternal life.

This morning's passage is a secret wrapped up in the unveiling secret, if you will. Scripture does this quite often. Peter's mother-in-law miracle sweeps the town, and now all of Galilee is at the door to see if spiderman is real (forgive me). Jesus responds to their needs. Jesus responds to our needs. Jesus works the late shift to heal the world. In fact, so pressing is the need, that he leaves in the morning to pray. The more pressing the need, the greater the pressure, the more arduous the task, the more overwhelming the need, the deeper we should press into prayer. Jesus had a lifetime of healing ahead of him, and so take the two hours to pray. This is how joy permeates destruction. This is how healing becomes a way of life. Pray. Set aside the pressures and pray.

And he does it with his Word and Sacrament, dear friends. Omniscient Jesus sees you today under the agony of this life, and he pronounces you his child without hesitation! He sees you. He sees you. And he will show you greater things still! At this altar, we are brought before the very one who has seen us all along, and he includes you, this morning. Stand at the door of Peter's mother-in-law and knock.