

**“Refill, Respond, Proclaim”**  
Message by DD Adams  
Providence Kemptown U.M. Church  
5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY  
February 4, 2018

The Old Testament lesson is from the book of Isaiah, chapter 40, verses 21 through 26. Don't you know? Haven't you heard? Wasn't it announced to you from the beginning? Haven't you understood since the earth was founded?

God inhabits the earth's horizon—its inhabitants are like locusts—stretches out the skies like a curtain and spreads it out like a tent for dwelling. God makes dignitaries useless and the earth's judges into nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely is their shoot rooted in the earth when God breathes on them, and they dry up; the windstorm carries them off like straw.

So to whom will you compare me, and who is my equal? says the holy one. Look up at the sky and consider: Who created these? The one who brings out their attendants one by one, summoning each of them by name. Because of God's great strength and mighty power, not one is missing.

The epistle lesson is from 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 16. If I preach the gospel, I have no reason to brag, since I'm obligated to do it. I'm in trouble if I don't preach the gospel.

The gospel lesson is from Mark, chapter 1, verses 35 through 39. Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he

could be alone in prayer. Simon and those with him tracked him down. When they found him, they told him, “Everyone’s looking for you!” He replied, “Let’s head in the other direction, to the nearby villages, so that I can preach there too. That’s why I’ve come.” He traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and throwing out demons. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Please pray with me. God you alone deserve all praise, and glory, and honor in our lives. Open our hearts today, make them transparent and see our responsibilities as Christian disciples. Show us how to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to our world. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Peace be with you! All of the lectionary texts for today proclaim the good news. Isaiah cries out the hugeness of our God, His strength and absolute power. God “stretches out the heavens like a curtain” and questions if we know and have heard? The Holy One says He can be compared to no one and none is His equal! The Lord declares His authority over heaven and earth; *this* gives comfort.

In 1 Corinthians 9:16, the apostle Paul cries out his need to proclaim the gospel. Paul’s goal in life was to share what Christ shared with him, and that he’ll willingly bear trouble. Paul released what he wanted in life—things like comforts, conveniences, or luxuries of one sort or another. He denied himself as Christ did, to serve God, and to proclaim Jesus as Messiah.

The gospel lesson in Mark shares a day in the life of Jesus. Jesus leaves the synagogue after casting out demons in a man. He then follows Simon to his house to heal Simon's mother-in-law who's sick with a fever. Jesus heals and lifts her up so she can serve God. Just as Jesus exorcised demons from the man in the synagogue, both are set free to serve and proclaim the good news. Our gospel reading focuses on verses 35 through 39. This is what I'd like you to hear.

After the whole community had come to Jesus for healing at Simon's house, Jesus goes to a deserted place very early the next morning to pray. He needs to reconnect with his Father. He knows he must pray and be filled in order to respond to God and proclaim the good news.

As Jesus is praying, the disciples wake up and hunted for Jesus. *Where is He?* Maybe the stresses of the world woke them. You know, when you retire for the evening and think about all the things needed to be done the next day, but Jesus responds differently. He knows the importance and priority of prayer.

As the disciples were anxiously hunting for Jesus, He prays to refill and renew His relationship with the Father. Jesus is teaching by example. He's saying no to the stresses the world bring. He's getting his priorities straight for the day, and *He's taking an hour* before he responds to others.

Jesus is teaching us when we should say no to the pressures of this world and to move close enough to our power and love source. He's teaching us to pray

first in order to discern what God is calling him to do. We need to acknowledge our need and allow the Lord to *come close enough* to us so we can renew and refill our strength.

When the disciples find Jesus they say “Everyone’s looking for you!” Jesus responds by saying, “Let’s head in the other direction, to the nearby villages, so that I can preach there too. That’s why I’ve come.” And that’s why Jesus prayed. So he would respond in the direction His Father wanted him to.

God changed their comfort zone and direction. How do you respond to change? It can be challenging, unsettling, and downright frightening. The good news is this! There are blessings when we go to God to refill. Our natural response to challenges is not necessarily what God would have us choose.

Life so often comes *at us*, and how we respond makes all the difference. To respond to challenges through the eyes of Christ is our ultimate aim. Just as Jesus’ aim was His Father’s. Jesus refilled through prayer, and through prayer he discerned the way to go.

But how can we proclaim the Christ as Messiah in word and action if we only draw on our own strength? How will we become co-workers with God and with each other until we go to God in prayer and refill with God’s love and power? To respond and proclaim to others rightly is not within our grasp . . . unless . . . we come close enough to God to be refilled with his love and power to proclaim.

That my dear friends can only be accomplished as we set our priorities. Because when the world is screaming, when your parent's are dying, when your family cries out for you, when your addiction won't let you go, when your puppy dies, when you loose your job, when your friends leave you, when your boss yells at you . . . when you feel alone and rejected . . . there's only one thing to do.

Do you know? Have you heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He doesn't grow tired or weary. His understanding is beyond human reach, giving power to the tired and reviving the exhausted. Youths will become tired and weary, young men will certainly stumble; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will fly up on wings like eagles; they will run and not be tired; they will walk and not be weary.

What is Isaiah saying? We exchange our lack of strength and refill with God's strength as we pray. We respond to God's leading, and we go and proclaim, first to ourselves and then to others. This is our aim. This is our responsibility.

Let's pray. Bless us God as we follow your example of prayer. For you are powerful in us. Prove to us you have your own keeping of time when we say we don't have the time. Help us release our time to you, as we respond and you work patiently in us. For you alone know the right and opportune moment. Do a work in us that changes and blesses us so our hearts and lives go with you. Amen.