

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Good Morning Friends!

In our series, we have heard how God called Abraham to do a new thing... to go to a new land, leaving all his inheritance and known community, for a place that God would reveal...Abraham was blessed with land and with offspring, and given the task to be a blessing to the nations. And even when God's people were unfaithful, God was still faithful.

Last week we heard how God changed ...adapted the strategy ...instead of calling one prophet to speak to the people...to call them back to God's ways ...God adjusted the strategy...it's right there in John's Gospel 3:16,

'God sent God's only son so that whosoever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life.'

God SENT Jesus to be face to face with the created peoples... Jesus is sent to teach and re-present with authority... Jesus is SENT to serve as the Word that became flesh.

But we must keep going to v17, *'For God sent the son not to judge the world, but that the world would be saved through him.'* These verses must be read together to understand God's will and God's mission... God's 'WHY'.

The scripture read today (Mt 9:35-38) is a brief summary of Jesus mission and ministry in the world. He **sees** the people...he **is present** to them...he **has compassion**... he **listens**... he **responds**. There is love, mercy & compassion given which brings healing, wholeness and restoration to the lost sheep, the broken people.

We see it again in the passage from Mark 7(24-30), while Jesus was making one of his three mission trips beyond his usual ministry area.

<Read>

This 1st century person had several things going against her... working to marginalize her:

-a woman - a Gentile (not of the Jewish, but Greek)

-from wrong neighborhood -no 'right' to speak to Jesus

Yet she breaks all the custom rules to seek and speak to Jesus. Why? It's all about her child...her daughter.

As you heard this story did you have any surprises? Something that made you say, What?

Think about the model of seeing, being present, having compassion, listening, responding. Maybe it's me... but did Jesus seem a bit *biased* to you? Jesus... v26...in essence says, 'not my mission... I'm here for this group'.

And the woman persisted... WHY? Because she had heard the stories of the One who could heal, bring wholeness, and restoration of the body, mind, spirit AND to community. She risked everything for her beloved child.

And in listening, Jesus adapted the strategy... to include the child, the woman and truly, the world.

How does this story inform our work for the 21st century?

- 1) The Jesus Way... **see** the people...be **present** to them... **have compassion... listens... respond**. This is a model to use today.
- 2) God sees all people... and responds to all... all are valuable
- 3) All have access to love, mercy & compassion

The Jesus Way is hard work... but it is possible.

We just have to make opportunities to engage with people.

The 21st century is different...we must adapt our strategies...

- Invite people...to participate, to show up, to have fun-food-fellowship
- Provide opportunities to connect, to have fun-food-fellowship
- Provide experiences to engage in healing, restoration , community

The challenge of the mission & ministry is still the same ... **'the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for the harvest'** (v38).

So let's remember that we are sent people... sent as Jesus was sent to share God's story. We are to go to be blessings.

Somewhere the model changed to be...ya'll come to the church. The strategy needs to be shifted again... to see the people where the people are, to connect outside of worship in the church, to listen to the need, and to respond with our story of faith, offering prayer and gathering hope.

Here's a story that came in this week... that meets a need...an unknown need.

2 daughters decided to have a celebration for their mother's 89th bday. Showered with cards... then a surprise dinner.

8 days later mother had crossed over to walk on heaven's road.

Who knew those memories would be the glue for their broken hearts? Who knew that the act of sending a card would be so special. Who knows what seeds of love, hope, and faith have been planted in the hearts of those engaged in this sacred moment?

We have a vision of being faithful to God even as God has been faithful to SJ lo these 227...soon to be 228 years! This vision is kin-dom minded! *And may require doing things differently than had been done in the past.*

How can we be part of building God's kin-dom? God empowers us through Holy Spirit...to have courage, boldness, and share our God stories. Think: What has God done for you? Who have you encountered that needed to be seen, listened to, and hear a word of hope in your story?

Remember... and realize that your journey of faith is NOT just for you! Your journey is part of the story of the cosmos (the world God created)! These stories are designed to be shared so that we can be 'the city on a hill and let the light shine for all to see.' (Mt 5:14) May it be so! Amen.
