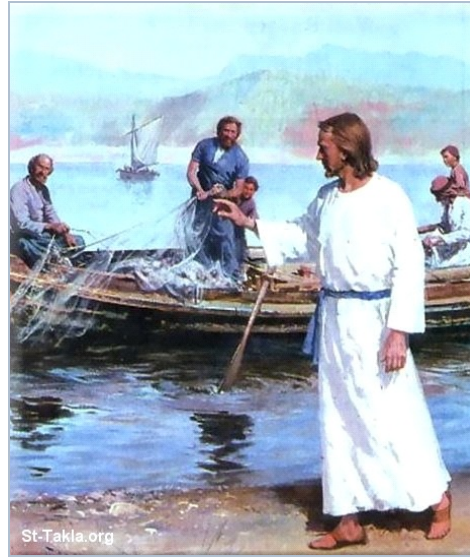


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# Walk in the Light

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**METHODIST CHURCH**  
*An Open-Spirited Community  
of Faith and Action*



Today's Gospel story is very beautiful, very life-affirming. It really bothers me when people try to explain it away.

In the last century it is as if some people were embarrassed by healing stories in the Gospels. Some have come up with "explanations." You've heard them: this was written before we understood much about the way diseases work. This might have been a seizure. Maybe Jesus met the man at the time one started and it appeared that he healed him. This story is far more beautiful than that. It is far more profound.

Last week we took a look at our own lives through the story of Peter and Andrew and James and John. They leave their nets and boats and start following Jesus, even though they do not know where this teacher is leading them. We talked about how theirs is an example of what Martin Luther said all Christians do—"we walk wet." Every day we step out in faith as we remember the promises God made to us at our baptism.

The very next verse starts Mark's first healing story. Right after James and John, Peter and Andrew join Jesus, Jesus heals someone even before that person chooses to become a follower. There is nothing the man does that makes him a "worthy" of healing. There is no statement of faith in God, no humble request, no promise of any kind. Jesus sees him and heals him.

John Wesley describe this with the phrase "prevenient grace," amazing grace.

There is even more to this story. Listen to it again.

They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.  
<sup>22</sup>They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.  
<sup>23</sup>Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit,  
<sup>24</sup>and he cried out, "Why are you meddling with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God."  
<sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"  
<sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.  
... <sup>27</sup>They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "**What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.**"

Did you hear it? Mark says this is not only a healing, it is a teaching. Ched Myers, a meticulous Bible Scholar, points out references to Jesus' teaching open the healing story and close the story. The man who was afflicted was an outcast in the eyes of the religious leaders of the time, the Scribes. Therefore healing him in the synagogue was itself a teaching: no one is an outcast. All are God's Children. All are claimed by God. God moves for the healing and inclusion of all persons. That, my friends, makes this story a beautiful, powerful teaching experience.

It gets better. After carefully reading Mark, it is easy to see how every healing story in Mark's gospel is about overcoming some form of social oppression.

The healing stories have a far deeper meaning than "Larry's got an itch there on his wrist, we'd better do something about that so he feels better."

**Healing is transforming—changing the very nature of the way God and humanity live together.**

Christ is the Light of the World: Every place Jesus goes, he opens up a space where good things can happen – freedom, healing, wholeness.

When we speak of the Light of Christ we are not limiting ourselves to physical sunlight. We are describing the way that Jesus opens up new places where good things can and do happen.

We who follow Jesus, also walk in his Light. We live in that Light. We extend the Light. We also open up more and more places where, in collaboration with the Light, healing happens.

This is what it means to be a disciple: we walk in the Light. We join Jesus where his Light is bringing good things to life.

Last Sunday I pointed out that the word “disciple” comes from an ancient word for “learning”: *discere*.

“Discernment” and “Desire” probably come from that same word.

**The word “disciple” means “Co-learner.”**

We may have a hard time thinking of ourselves as worthy to be called “Disciples,” but we surely can think of ourselves as “Co-learners!”

What makes this teaching/healing so beautiful is this is a therapeutic model of salvation. Salvation is health and wholeness, for the man who is healed and for the whole community. Salvation is not a result of judicial action. Jesus saves us without all that. That is what the writer of 1<sup>st</sup> John means when he used the phrase “*the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin.*” Remember that blood is an ancient way of saying “Life.” Ancient languages did not view sin as something horrible but as “missing the mark.” So John is saying “The life, the love, the Light of Jesus helps us stop missing the mark with our lives and start living in ways that make a difference, so God is light, and in God there is no darkness at all...<sup>7</sup>if we live in the light, as God is in the light, we are [also] one with each other. – I John 5:5, 7

As we walk in the Light we not only become who we are meant to be, we become part of that light too! This is the joy of being Disciples of Jesus.

Every time we build community, we are doing what Jesus did. Every time we get people to notice each other, to figure out how to work together, we are disciples of the Light of the World, co-learners and healers.

Disciples share the light. That is our story. That is how we follow Jesus Christ. Every community-building act, every act of justice, every act of inclusion, every time we care for the sick, every time we meet someone at the point of their need we are walking the Light of Christ.

When we Walk in the Light, **we become Partakers of Divine Nature.** II Peter 1:4

So keep on keeping on! And take heart: you walk in the Light. As you extend Christ’s Light, you yourselves become more and more a part of that Light. It is a long, intimate process:

Ruth Bell Graham’s chose this epitaph for her head stone:

**“End of construction. Thank you for your patience.”**

They come from a road construction sign she once commented on, saying, “What a marvelous image for the Christian life – a work under construction.”

## I JOHN 1:5-7

*Inclusive Language Version*

This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus and declare to you:  
God is light, and in God there is no darkness at all.

<sup>6</sup>If we say we have intimacy with God while still living in darkness, we are liars and do not live in truth.

<sup>7</sup>But if we live in the light, as God is in the light, we are one with each other, and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten, purifies us from all sin.

*His Grandmother sat on the floor with him and on a large loose page from a coloring book she wrote large the letters of my 2-year-old nephew’s name: J-A-Y-V-Y-N. That is your name! He carried that page around with him all night, showing everybody: This is who I am!  
Today’s Gospel no less tells us who we are as Disciples of Jesus Christ.  
Carry it with you!*

## \*GOSPEL MARK 1:21-27

*Please turn to Pew Bible, New Testament, p. 35*

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**“What is this? A new teaching—with authority!**

**He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”**

Disciple - a person who is a pupil or an adherent of another; follower:

*i.e. a disciple of Freud.*

[Old English *discipul*, from Latin *discipulus* pupil, from *discere* to learn]

Ched Myers & Marie Dennis, *Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1996.