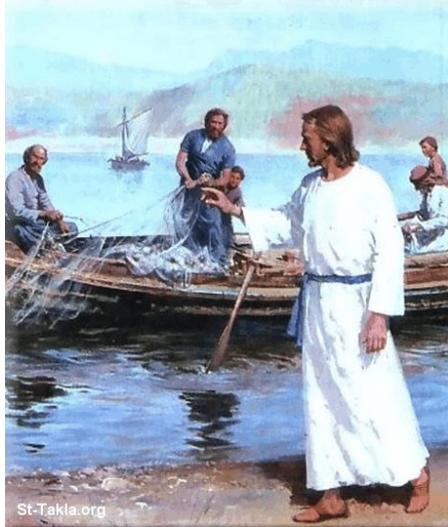


February 5, 2012

# Where Jesus is on the Move Today

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



When the plane was slicing through the clouds yesterday on approach into Lincoln's Airport I looked out of the window and said, "It looks like we had a little bit of snow." Trudging across the parking lot to my car I reality hit me: "We had a lot of snow!"

Tom Stanley kept the home fires burning and coordinated snow removal. Lots of other people worked unseen through the night—electrical crews worked to keep electricity on—or to get it back on, city snow removal crews (Tim's work called him in today), and rescue workers. All this so we could be safe. I am grateful. It felt so good to walk into a warm building this morning.

Today's Gospel is one of the most tender and poignant passages in Mark. Jesus is obviously much-loved in his adopted hometown of Capernaum.

I wonder if he thought about staying put in that little town. It is a beautiful area, on the north shore of sparkling blue Lake Galilee. The people obviously need him and want his spiritual leadership.

Day and night people throng around him, so he gets away for a morning and refocuses, and tells Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John that it is time to move on:

<sup>37</sup>When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' <sup>38</sup>He 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.**'

We know the rest of the story. Jesus moves on to new communities and to new situations. New people join those who follow him. New opponents rise up to try to stop him. He keeps moving on.

These words of Jesus shed light on our lives as followers of Jesus, as Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

On the surface we think we lead settled lives. We don't wander from town to town, looking for lodging. But down in our hearts we know that we are on a journey, a faith journey, a journey with Christ that takes us to new places every day.

We might think we want things to stay stable. We might want to "stay in Capernaum," and be comfortable and cared for. Events of life move us on.

We may even from time to time have a restlessness in our soul. That is good. That is Christ on the move in us. Jesus' statement comes to life in us: **'Let us go on to the neighboring communities.'**

Even if we live all our lives in the same city, or even on the same street, events of life move us on. There are new parts of the community we connect with. There are new people in our lives.

**Lincoln has a lot of neighboring communities.** We can stay put right here and follow in Jesus' steps, by connecting with the communities all around us. We probably do more than we know.

Let's start with something big. Lincoln public school students now enter LPS speaking 60 languages. That is a lot of neighboring communities right here in our city's limits.

Now let's bring it even closer to home. Every block has new residents, every neighborhood is in transition in some way. Each time we keep up with new developments, even though we might live in the same house, we are following Christ "into the neighboring communities."

**Every stage of life brings with it new challenges.  
Every campus changes daily: new students, new staff,  
new realities.**

**The process of aging puts us in more contact  
with differing people.**

Can we carry our faith, our love for Christ and Christ's love for us into every situation, into every community? Paul takes the way Jesus is on the move to a new level. He pushes sedentary, comfort-seeking Christians in Corinth into becoming who they need to become to reach people around them:

**<sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak.  
I have become all things to all people...**

**<sup>23</sup>I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.**

Jesus is always on the move! The faith has always been on the move. Every time we get comfortable, Jesus has a way of moving us on. It happened in Capernaum. It happens today in Lincoln.

United Methodists are focusing on what it means to be disciples of Jesus. We are trying to transform our thinking of ourselves as followers of Jesus, part of his Kingdom movement, rather than being a sedentary organization. A lot of United Methodist are reading a book just out:

Gil Rendle, ***Back to Zero: The Search to Rediscover the Methodist Movement***. Rendle says:

Disciples relate to their families, their workplaces, their communities, and to the globe in changed ways that will transform the world.

God is doing something new and quite difficult in us. It is an act not yet complete. It is a transformation sufficiently difficult that it will be costly in what new things we will need to learn and risk."

Perhaps the person in Capernaum who really understood all of this best was Peter's mother-in-law. "He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up. Then the fever left her; and she began to serve them." Serving is the same word as "deacon"—she ministered to others.

She moved beyond her comfort level. She accepted the gift of healing she was given and began serving others in Christ's name.

This week one of our own, Tom Schroeder, began volunteering at Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI), our Mission High School that educates over 400 high school students. Most would not be in high school if LPI did not exist. Tom heard about LPI from Luis, from me, from Said, and decided to serve there. Where did he learn how to do that? First Church, you raised him. He knows from you the way the faith moves us past our comfort zone and into new places to serve. You are doing serving in new ways right now, probably in more ways than you even know.

**Where is Jesus on the Move Today?** Right here. In you. In me. There is no place better equipped to connect with the neighboring communities. I can't wait to see what Christ will do through us.

### **I CORINTHIANS 9:16-23**

<sup>16</sup>If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!

<sup>17</sup>For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission.

<sup>18</sup>What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.

<sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became As a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law.

<sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law.

<sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

<sup>23</sup>I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

**GOSPEL - MARK 1:29-39**

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

As soon as they\* left the synagogue,  
they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

<sup>30</sup>Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever,  
and they told him about her at once.

<sup>31</sup>He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.  
Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick  
or possessed with demons.

<sup>33</sup>And the whole city was gathered around the door.

<sup>34</sup>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.

<sup>35</sup> In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out  
to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

<sup>36</sup>And Simon and his companions hunted for him.

<sup>37</sup>When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching  
for you.' <sup>38</sup>He 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.'**

<sup>39</sup>And he went throughout Galilee,  
proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Gil Rendle, *Back to Zero: The Search to Rediscover the Methodist Movement*,  
Abingdon Press, 2011