

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Simon Peter and those others who were looking for Jesus said to Jesus, ***"Everyone is looking for you."*** ***And Jesus said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out"*** (Mark 1:37-38).

Huh? That's Jesus' response? He wants to leave? Well, we'll get more into His response later.

In the meantime, this has been a busy day for Jesus. In fact, these last four Gospel lessons all took place the same day. In the morning, while He passed alongside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon Peter and Andrew his brother casting a fishing net into the sea. Immediately after Jesus spoke to them: ***"Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men"*** (Mark 1:17), they followed Jesus.

As Jesus, Peter, and Andrew walked further, Jesus saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee, mending their fishing nets and He called them. Immediately, James and John followed Jesus.

Then, Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James, and John went to Capernaum and Jesus began teaching in the synagogue. Everyone was astonished at His teaching, since He taught with authority and not like any other rabbi or scribe. While at the synagogue, a man possessed by an unclean spirit cried out to Jesus and immediately, the unclean spirit left this man. Immediately, the conversation began to spread all throughout Capernaum about what Jesus did at the synagogue.

Jesus then left the synagogue and visited the home of Peter and Andrew, with James and John. While there, Peter's mother-in-law was extremely ill with a high fever. Now, at this time, high fevers meant that death was likely near, but Jesus did the unexpected. Instead of protecting Himself from her illness, He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up and the fever left her. She was completely healed, and even to the point that she began to serve her son-in-law's guests.

That evening, the conversation that began at the synagogue had spread all throughout the city of Capernaum. Soon, the entire city began to gather at the door to see Jesus. One after another, after another gather outside the door. These people were curious if all the chatter was true. Wouldn't you be?

Among these people are the ill – *those with various diseases and illnesses* – and those possessed by demons. They were curious if Jesus could, in fact, heal them.

Now, you may be wondering: “How could an entire city be gathered outside a single house in Capernaum?” Well, although Capernaum was known as a city, it was not a very large city. It is likely the population was around 1,500 people. And, Capernaum was situated along a trade route, so there could have been even some curious outsiders mixed in with the locals.

So, as He did with Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus does not hesitate to touch the sick and demon possessed as He heals them all. Now, what caused all these people to come to Jesus? And what were they seeking? Were they seeking only a miracle worker, or were they seeking the promised Messiah?

From our text, we do not know for sure. But it is likely that many came not to hear the preaching of Jesus, but in order to be healed by Him. With all the crowds, it was only a matter of time until Jesus could have been anointed the leader, or king, of Capernaum, due to His popularity. Jesus knew this. He knew this quite well.

So, under the cover of the darkness of night, Jesus left early in the morning and went to a desolate place and there He prayed. Eventually Peter and the others found Jesus and said to Him, ***“Everyone is looking for you.”*** Jesus replied, ***“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out”*** (Mark 1:36-37).

During this season of Epiphany, Jesus is revealed to us as the Son of God in many ways. But what is Jesus revealing to us this morning? Yes, we see that He has the divine power to heal and cast out demons. Yes, we see that He preaches and teaches with authority. But what does Jesus mean by His reply to ***“Everyone is looking for you”*** when He says, ***“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out”***?

As awesome as it would be for an ordinary man to be crowned king of a city due to his popularity, this is not the reason Jesus came. This is not the reason God took upon Himself our human flesh.

At times, you may think that if God is so great, mighty, and powerful, that He may not notice you. Sometimes, you may feel that you are forgotten. Many during Isaiah's time thought God had forgotten them. To them, God's promises seemed meaningless. In fact, it was common for many to speak this way: ***"My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"*** (Isaiah 40:27).

Even if God's people lack faith in God's promises, this does not deter the one true God. Isaiah proclaims: ***"The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable"*** (Isaiah 40:28b).

So, even when we are weary and doubt, God is there offering us comfort and assurance. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. And even when we are weak and we may see ourselves as insignificant, God increases our strength as Isaiah writes, ***"They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles"*** (Isaiah 40:31).

This great God does not overlook anyone. This is why everyone who comes to Jesus at Capernaum for healing is healed. Jesus cannot overlook anyone. This is not His nature. He cares for the weary and the weak.

But Jesus knows that He cannot be in Capernaum forever, since this is not the reason He came. So, when Peter and the others say to Jesus, ***"Everyone is looking for you,"*** Jesus knows this is not true. So far *only* those in Capernaum are looking for Him, but He did not come as the Savior of *only* Capernaum. Now, Capernaum matters to Jesus, since He cares deeply for these people, but He came for everyone! He came for the entire world! He came as the Savior for Cana, Nazareth, Samaria, Jerusalem, and to the ends of the earth. Jesus came as the Savior for all people and not just a few.

Peter and the others wanted Jesus to focus on the people of Capernaum. After all, everything was going well there, and Jesus' popularity could open doors of opportunities for all of the disciples.

We, too, can often lose our focus. You see, every day, our sinful nature tempts us to lose our focus by turning away from God. We look for refuge in temporal things, such as money, possessions, and health. We look for knowledge outside of God's Word, instead of seeking knowledge in His Word, which is true knowledge. We seek out man's favor, rather than what God commands of us.

So, what does God command of us? He teaches us to learn and apply the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, so we can regulate our entire life in being in accordance with His Word. This is why we are beginning a new Sunday adult Bible Study this morning on the catechism. Through catechesis and Bible study, we devote ourselves with God's Word daily and carry it in our hearts and on our lips. We grow in knowledge as we gladly hear and read God's Word and apply God's Word in our lives. We fear and love God, and love, help, and support all of our neighbors from conception in the mother's womb all the way to natural death.

Thanks be to God that He did not lose His focus. Even though the people of Capernaum did not want Jesus to leave, Jesus knew that His focus was to save the lost. He came to defeat the power of sin, death, and the devil through His suffering and death. He came to save you!

This is why Jesus came. He came to set us free. You see, Christ's atoning suffering and death on the cross, as well as His bodily resurrection from the dead has set us free from Satan's bondage and we receive this all by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Unlike Peter and the others who were searching for Jesus that morning in Capernaum, we do not have to search hard to find Him. You see, through His Means of Grace – *His Word and Sacrament* – Jesus is never far away.

Jesus is still preaching repentance, He is still casting out demons, and He is still healing the ill, the weak, and the weary. Christ is here with us. He comes to each of us in a very personal and special way. He comes to us through His Word and Sacrament. He is here to personally hear us confess our sins as He personally forgives each of our sins.

Through His Word, Christ is still preaching and teaching. We hear His voice through Christ's called and ordained servants as Christ continues to shepherd His flock. Christ's Words lead us to eternal life in His constant care and away from the wolves who would destroy us.

Christ is still healing. He continues to be the Great Physician. In this temporal realm for which we live, Christ uses doctors, nurses, therapists, but when a person is healed, that person is healed because of Jesus. In the eternal realm, Christ brings us healing through the eating and drinking of His very Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, which forgives our sins and strengthens our faith in Christ so we can meet the days ahead.

So, what does Christ reveal to us this day? He reveals that He never loses His focus. He didn't come to save just a select few. He came to save you. He came as the Savior from sin. He came as the Savior for the world, so that all who would repent and trust in Him would be saved. This is why He came! He came to save you! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**