



# First United Church of Oak Park

## **More Than Anyone**

Mark 6: 1-13

The Rev. John Edgerton

July 4, 2021

Throughout his early ministry, Jesus would travel all across the country, visiting far-away towns and even crossing over into foreign countries. But everywhere he went, Jesus found people in need of healing and hope. And Jesus proclaimed the good news of the realm of God and he made real those teachings with acts of mercy and love. With his hands as well as his words, Jesus was able to accomplish all the healing that was needed from Judah to the Decapolis to Tyre and Sidon.

But then he arrived back in his home country, to Nazareth and the surrounding villages. And there, like everywhere, he found people in need of healing and hope. And just as he had many times before, Jesus stood before the people in the synagogues and began to teach them about the good news. But here in Nazareth, in Jesus' home country, it wasn't going very well. In the Decapolis, the people had been spellbound — here they were listless. In Judah they had hung on Jesus' every word — here they were whispering among one another. In Tyre and Sidon, the people were moved to hope — here they were swept up in disbelief.

“Isn't that the carpenter? Joseph's son? James's brother? They're a nice family and all, good ordinary sorts, but who does this guy think he is, talking this way about the realm of God?” The people didn't find hope in Jesus' words. And what's more, they didn't find healing at Jesus' hands, either. There were many in need of healing, but the Gospel says that Jesus could not heal anyone, just a few here and there. Jesus could not accomplish all the healing that was needed.

He could not? What am I supposed to make of that? Shouldn't Jesus be able to do however much healing he wants to? The Gospel says, “He could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.”

So Jesus does something different, something very different — he lends his healing hands and his words of hope to the disciples. He says to the Disciples, “Now this power is yours, too; go out into the villages and heal the sick and deliver the possessed.” And Jesus sent them out two by two, into the very places that rejected

him, the very places where Jesus could not heal people, only a few here and there. And the Disciples cured many, the Gospel says. Jesus could not heal more than a few; the Disciples healed many. To accomplish all the healing that was needed, Jesus created a community of care and hope and healing. We see here in the Gospel that Jesus lives out the truth of the matter — that the work of the realm of God is bigger than what any one person can accomplish, even when that person is Jesus himself! The work of the realm of God is bigger than what any one person can accomplish, even when that person is Jesus himself! To accomplish all the healing that was needed, it took a community of care, and hope, and healing.

We stand today in a world where, everywhere we go, everywhere we go, everywhere we go, we see people in need of hope and healing. And I mean that on an ordinary, but soul-deep level. After a year of lockdown, in the midst of a historic racial reckoning, in the wake of civil unraveling of our democratic norms, following a sudden mad scramble to get vaccine appointments, where it was everyone for themselves and it seemed a spot would never open up, and then all of a sudden, the signs in front of Walgreens and Walmart say “free walk-in Covid vaccine.” What has just happened? What have we just experienced, what have we lived through, if not totally intact, and what are we still living through today? We stand today in a world where, everywhere we go, everywhere we go, everywhere we go, we see people in need of hope and healing. On a soul-deep level.

That is the work of the realm of God. And it is bigger than any one person. Greater than a pastor, greater than a president, greater than a pope, greater than any one person could accomplish. Even if that person were Jesus himself.

What is needed today is the same thing Jesus saw in Nazareth: a community of care and hope and healing. That is what we need to be a part of. A community of hope and healing. The works of this are going to be ordinary things — they must be ordinary things, because care and hope and healing are as ordinary as the sunrise, as ordinary and glorious as the sunrise.

Being part of the work of the realm of God — being part of the community of care and hope and healing — may look like inviting someone to join you for dinner, because you know they are lonely. Or it may be telling someone that it is okay that they need to take some more time before coming out into crowds, because you know they are frightened. It may be that you help your workplace or school or family find familiar routines again, or it may be that you must forge new patterns and embrace an uncertainty that is not going away. We stand today in a world where, everywhere, everywhere, everywhere we go, we see people in need of hope and healing. Just look around you, look at your

loved ones, look at your church, look at your coworkers, look at your neighbors, look yourself in the mirror — everywhere, we see people in need of hope and healing.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called — like those first Disciples — we are called to be part of a community of care and hope and healing. In caring for one another, we find ourselves enmeshed in love. In holding fast to hope, we find the best possibilities yet open before us. In holding our hands out seeking soul-deep healing, we find our own souls are touched as well.

The world is in need of healing. If Jesus could do it on his own, he would have already. This is our work to do — the healing of the world, and we must follow Jesus, who has sent us out to do it. May God help us to be a community of care and hope and healing, everywhere we go. Amen.