#### Gathering Together: Toward a Culture of Mutuality and Full Participation for Persons with Disabilities and Their Allies

## A Worship Service and Monologue Reflection on Mark 1:29-39

*by Darla Sloan*

### Greetings

One: May Christ’s power be at work in you.

**All: And also in you.**

### Call to Worship

One: Let us gather to experience the life-transforming power of God’s love.

**All: We come seeking to hear Christ’s timeless message.**

One: Rejoice and be glad for,

through Christ,

the Good News is within our grasp.

**All: We trust in God’s promises**

**fulfilled in Jesus Christ.**

**Let us worship joyfully**

**and then go out empowered to serve faithfully.**

**Let us worship the God of life**

**and new life!**

### Hymn

“Take, O Take Me As I Am / Oh! Prends-moi tel que je suis” (*More Voices* 85)

### Prayer for Illumination

We give thanks, O God, for sacred stories.

Through them you nurture our imaginations,

touch our feelings,

increase our awareness,

and challenge our assumptions.

We pray that you might bless

our hearing of these sacred stories today.

Through your word,

speak to us,

and grant that,

by the power of your Spirit,

we may become hearers

and doers of your word.

Through Jesus Christ,

your word made flesh.

Amen.

### Scripture Reading

Mark 1: 29–39

### Moment of Silent Reflection

### Hymn

“Love Is The Touch” (*More Voices* 89)

### Monologue

And I Began to Serve Them…

Mark 1:29–39

There was no way I was having that man at my table! Me, serve the one who would undoubtedly bring disaster on my family? I think not! I couldn’t believe my ears when Simon and Andrew returned home and announced that they were leaving behind their nets to follow an itinerant preacher. Fish for people *indeed*! Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous? I laughed and laughed until tears streamed down my cheeks. And then I cried for hours when I realized that this was no joke! They were really going to follow this guy. Oh, the men tried to explain...but I had heard all I needed to hear about this Jesus. From the day he came to town, he was all that anyone could talk about. They were saying that he got up to speak in the synagogue and he taught, not as one of the scribes, but as one having authority. Like he could author a new chapter in your life with just his word. People were saying Jesus didn’t talk about God as though he’s studied up on God….but like he knew God personally. People were listening to him as though he were the source of all wisdom, the ground of all being—well, as if he were God come to earth to address us directly. Well, I for one wasn’t going to be so easily fooled by this charismatic charlatan! I was convinced that this Jesus of Nazareth was *bad news*! I mean, can anything good come from Nazareth?

Can you really blame me? I had my daughter to think about. What would become of her? I was convinced that it would only be a matter of time before the Romans got ahold of them. Simon or his friends could end up arrested—or worse yet, crucified—and then what? How could that be good news for anyone?

When Simon made up his mind, there wasn’t much I could do—except when it came to what went on in our house. The home is the only place where we Israelite women have any authority, and so I made up my mind then and there that if this Jesus of Nazareth was going to enter into my house, it would be over my dead body!

And so it was. There I lay, barely able to move. No, I wasn’t really dead, but in many ways, I may as well have been. Struck down in the prime of my life—with so many things I should have been doing, so many things I wanted to be doing—but my body had betrayed me. Who was I when I could no longer do all the things that I took such pride in? What good was I when I could no longer do all the things that any normal person is supposed to be able to do? When I could no longer actively participate in the life of the community, what was the point?

These things kept running through my head like a thousand demons. You know, my rabbi says that the word “demon”—*daimon*—means one that divides. Our demons are all those barriers within us that keep us divided, that separate us from our best selves, that prevent us from being whole and fully integrated and from knowing the fullness of life that is God’s will for us. I think that, even more than the fever itself, my demons would have been the end of me, if Jesus hadn’t saved me—again, not so much from the fever, as from myself…

I will never forget that moment as long as I live. I remember that, when Jesus came into my room and stood over me, I was filled with the sense that I was in the very presence of the living God. He didn’t say a word. He simply took me by the hand. Do you have any idea how powerful it is to have someone take you by the hand when no one has wanted to touch you in a long time? Jesus touched me—a woman with a fever, and so likely possessed by an unclean spirit and ritually unclean. This made him unclean by association. He was willing to sacrifice himself for me. He took me by the hand and raised me up. You could say he ressurected me. This was no resuscitation. There’s no going back to my “normal life.” I know I will never be the same again. The fever left me, and I was left with the distinct impression that somehow, I was important—maybe not so important that someone would write about me in a book some day, but I sensed nonetheless that what was happening to me wasn’t just about me and what I could or couldn’t do. I sensed that I had a role to play in some plan that was bigger than anything any of us could have ever imagined. I didn’t know what to do next so I did the only thing I could—I began to serve them.

By the end of the evening, I along with everyone else in the house was serving countless others. It seemed as though the whole city was gathered around the door. Many had travelled a great distance and many—the weary, the wounded, the sick, the possessed—were in need of food and basic care, while they waited for their chance to be touched by the kind and healing hands of Jesus.

We all did what we could. At one point in the evening, I was making my way through the crowd with a very big, cumbersome basket of bread and stuff, and a man motioned to me. He had, well, I don’t really know what he had—I had never seen anyone who looked like he did, or moved like he did, or sounded like he did. It didn’t matter; I didn’t need to know. I was more than happy to go over and hand him some bread. He said, “Thanks, but actually…I was wondering if I could give you a hand with that basket you are struggling with.” My first reaction was to say, “No, no…that’s okay, I can manage just fine.” But in the same instant, I had a vision of Jesus looking over me as I lay in my sick bed. And I remembered that this wasn’t just about me and what I could do or couldn’t do—it wasn’t even about what I could or couldn’t do for others. It was about what we could do together with everybody fully participating in the work at hand. I handed my neighbour my basket, and he too began to serve them.

And so it continued long into the night. You might think it was depressing—all that human misery gathered in one place—but in fact, quite the opposite is true. Gathered together around Jesus, everyone was filled with hope and life—*everyone*! That’s when something important became very clear to me. Yes, Jesus cured many people that day, but if being saved means being a “whole person,” having abundant life, and living in communion with God and others, then Jesus saved us all—even those who were not cured of any ailment that day. Don’t get me wrong, being cured was a real blessing. I know that all too well. However, I also know that while physical wellness is only temporary, salvation is eternal. And it isn’t just something we get in life beyond death; this communion is something we can experience here and now. That was the real miracle of that night. The spirit of communion and community among all of us—whether we received healing or not, we were a whole people, everyone working and serving together each as we were able.

By early in the morning, I was so absorbed in what I was doing that I didn’t even realize that Jesus had disappeared. Simon and his companions went off to look for him, to bring him back to finish what he started. But Simon came back alone. He took me aside to tell me that Jesus would not be coming back. That he, and Jesus, and the rest of their companions were leaving immediately for the neighbouring towns so that the message could be proclaimed there as well. For a split-second, I was furious. There were still so many here that needed attention! I looked with pity upon all the people who had gathered, seeking healing, seeking wholeness, seeking hope...I wanted to throw up my hands in despair, but then I saw them—my hands. These hands that Jesus had taken in his, and I knew what I had to do. And I began to serve them.

### Musical Reflection

### Prayers of the People

### Hymn

“Let Us Build a House (All Are Welcome)” (*More Voices* 1)

### Blessing

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