

7th Sunday 2009

What's new? That's one of those conversation starters that's an alternative to: How are you or How's it going? What's new? When you ask that question is there any underlying supposition that you will hear something good that's happening in the life of that person? I think so. I think it's more than just news but the hope, the desire that you're going to hear something good, happy, hopeful. Now of course it's more than likely that you won't. Especially in these days, with the economy, job loss, the stock market, foreclosures etc when you ask the question you run the risk of hearing not very good news. But still we ask the question, what's new? What is good, wonderful, life-giving, hopeful for you?

Today's liturgy is answering the question, what's new? God is always and ever new and always and ever doing something new in and for us. Listen to the first reading. See I am doing something new. It's springing forth. Can't you see it? What we hear in today's first reading is God's saying, forget the past, let go of what holds you, binds you even paralyzes you. Receive my love and my forgiveness. Let me do something new in you.

Imagine if you would God asking you the question, What's new? And God waits patiently and hears your laments, your worries, your aches and pains and asks again, So what's new? God is used to hearing our bad news, our sins and our stupidity but God is still asking What's new? And underlying that question is "Do you believe that my desire for you is to be loved, whole, restored, deep down joyful? See I am doing something new.... Always and everywhere.

What we have been seeing in the Marcan Gospel's these past weeks is an actualization of God's desire for healing and wholeness for the community of Israel through the presence and action of Jesus in the world. We have heard the stories of the healing miracles where the encounter with Jesus restores one to himself, his or her loved ones, to the community. Today we have another story that shows how God is doing something new and immediate in the life of the community. What is so powerful in this story of the paralyzed man is that it is all about community. It's a community of friends that has such faith in Jesus' power to manifest the goodness and healing power of God, that they "go through the roof" to get their friend to Jesus. (I imagine that whoever the owner of the house was also "going

through the roof” as he saw what was happening? It is the community of witnesses who see what God has done in and through Jesus.

So what’s new for the paralyzed man? He is free to move again within the community of friends. His movement is not just the freedom from physical paralysis but freedom from the sin that has paralyzed him as well. This story speaks not only of physical healing but spiritual healing as well. And it must be contagious. (In the best sense of that word) All are meant to be touched by their witnessing this breaking through of God’s power in Jesus.

So what’s new? Is there any chance that what I have been saying sounds “true”, “real” “authentic”, even possible? Or is it just a “band-aid” to try to cover our deep down skepticism, our deep down woundedness, our deep down fear that God in Jesus is “old” and not “new” at all.

I would be dishonest if I didn’t say that very, very often I sit with the skeptics in the story wondering who this Jesus is and what can he really do to change the way things are. How can he really heal, restore, do something in one as old and tired as me?

There are, my friends, many barriers that keep us from Jesus. Our own emotional, spiritual, psychic immobility, life’s disappointments, the sufferings of loved ones. The crowdedness of our busy lives can get in the way of our coming to Jesus for the healing, forgiveness, restoration that we need to be truly “made new” for ourselves and for our community.

So let me leave you with the image of God’s asking you “What’s new?” Hear it from the God who forgives who desires to free and forgive. Hear it from Jesus who desires to be one of those friends who carries you. Hear it from the Spirit of God who is always moving, changing, healing, restoring, desiring that you know who you are infinitely loved and unimaginably new.