

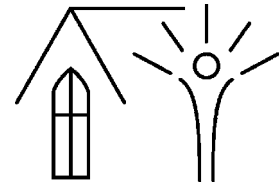


**ROSELLE**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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*Our Mission Statement:*

*“To Know Christ,  
To Grow in Christ,  
To Show Others Christ”*



January 29, 2006

## Sermon – “Sharing Our Story”

Mark 1:21-28

Reverend Angia Snyder

In this season after Epiphany, and before the beginning of Lent, which in the church we call Ordinary Time, it is a time for us to hear the stories of the call of the disciples and prophets and of the beginnings of the ministry of Jesus. It’s during this time that the church reflects on the authority of God, God’s command, God’s purpose, and God’s promise.<sup>1</sup> We are reminded in this Ordinary Time that God is with us not only in the times of the great celebrations of our lives or in the times of great catastrophe, but also in the ordinary, everyday moments that make up the period of time that is the vast majority of our lives. And it’s in this season of the church year that we are invited to reflect on our own call to ministry and our own place in the scheme of prophetic ministry and discipleship.<sup>2</sup>

In this second of the three years of the lectionary cycle we focus on the Gospel of Mark, the shortest and probably the oldest of the four Gospels included in the New Testament, but yet the one that is written in a simple language that is easy for us to read and understand but yet tells a story that is so very powerful.<sup>3</sup> The Learning Bible labels the section of scripture that we heard read just a few moments ago through the end of chapter nine as “Healings, Miracles and Stories”.<sup>4</sup> And it is in these stories that we hear the good news of Jesus who displays the power of God by healing people and working miracles.<sup>5</sup>

Barbara Lundblad introduces a sermon that she wrote several years ago, based on today’s gospel, with this story. She says she has a friend who carries a backpack that is covered with buttons. You know the kind of buttons to which she’s referring – those kind we see around the time of yearly elections, especially the big election years. She says she worries that somebody who disagrees with her friend’s buttons may start a fight with her on the New York subway, but her friend doesn’t worry about it at all. Her friend is too young to have ever pinned the button on her backpack that was so popular back in the sixties, but perhaps many of you will remember that button. You probably saw it, you may have even had one. I had to hide mine when I took it home. It read “Question Authority”. It was pinned to jeans and denim jackets, both on high school and college campuses and off, and it gave notice that those in authority might not be there for long. Those buttons haven’t been seen for many years. I don’t know whatever happened to mine. But Barbara Lundblad says that today people would be more likely to wear a button that says: “Whatever happened to authority?” We hear about the breakdown in

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<sup>1</sup> Brueggemann, Walter, *Texts for Preaching, A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV-Year B*, Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, p.125

<sup>2</sup> *Seasons of the Spirit Congregational Life Advent, Christmas, Epiphany*, 2005-2006, p.107.

<sup>3</sup> *The Learning Bible*, Contemporary English Version, American Bible Society, New York, 1995, pp. 1812.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 1816.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 1816.

authority at every turn – from the home to the halls of politics, from the classrooms to even the offices<sup>6</sup> of our own United Methodist Bishops.

Mark tells us that Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum and when the Sabbath came Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. Now what Jesus taught was not important in this story that Mark tells because he never bothers to tell us what it was that Jesus was teaching. But what is important to Mark is that Jesus taught with authority.

We know of two kinds of authority. There's the authority that comes with an office, a judge, a president, a priest, a clergy person, those who have authority because of the law or by the community's giving of the authority they have in their office, their ability to influence, to cause something to happen. But then there's the authority that's innate, the inside type of authority. And Jesus, Jesus spoke with this authority.<sup>7</sup> Jesus did not command authority for the sake of accumulating personal power, but rather he spoke with an authority that was able to liberate and heal others.<sup>8</sup>

Today we at Roselle United Methodist Church recognize and celebrate our chapter of United Methodist Women. This past September the Roselle UMW quietly passed by their sixty-fifth anniversary. Sixty-five years of being in mission to women, children and youth in the United States and in more than 100 countries around the world. Sixty-five years as part of an organization established in 1869 as The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. For more than a century women in the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren traditions have answered the call to Christian discipleship through a life of Christian witness, mission outreach and service. They have led the struggle for human rights and social justice.

The generation of women who founded the early missionary societies developed powerful networks and organizational structures to help women attain full participation in the life of the church and in society.<sup>9</sup> These women led with authority. Authority granted to them through the authorizing power of God, that same authorizing power that we heard about in today's Psalm and in the gospel lesson.

In the early years of the women's mission organizations, the focus was on sending missionaries and helping to change the lives of women and girls in foreign lands. They incorporated the values of home and family into public life, as they addressed issues of poverty, child labor, immigration, migrant labor, family life, racial discrimination, and even, and may I pause here to say thank you God for these women, and even full clergy rights for women in ministry.

Many problems faced by the women at the turn of the century have reemerged in our time with a new and demanding urgency: new waves of immigration, homelessness, racial divisions, threats to the environment, substance abuse and addiction, lack of affordable health care, concerns for the well-being of children and the elderly, public education, questions about women's roles in society and in ministry and world peace.<sup>10</sup>

United Methodist Women have inherited the vision of women's missionary societies of eight denominations. The purpose for their existence today is first and foremost "to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church."<sup>11</sup> United Methodist Women find themselves in a community of women who nurture and

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<sup>6</sup> Lundblad, The Rev. Barbara K., "A New Kind of Authority", February 2, 1997, <http://www.day1.net>.

<sup>7</sup> Burrill, The Rt. Rev. William, "Sermon for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany", January 30, 2000, The Protestant Hour, <http://www.faithandvalues.com>.

<sup>8</sup> *Seasons of the Spirit*, p. 102.

<sup>9</sup> Source unknown but believed to be from the United Methodist Women's web site at the General Board of Global Ministries.

<sup>10</sup> Source unknown....

<sup>11</sup> West, Maxine, Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries, *United Methodist Guidelines for Women's Ministries*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2004, p. 7.

encourage one another in their spiritual growth, in their personal lives, in their leadership responsibilities and in their transformation as they become women who are to lead with authority.

Walter Bruggemann writes that this season after Epiphany marks the journey from Christmas to Good Friday and Easter, those most decisive moments in human history in which the self-revelation of God has occurred. It is in the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that God peeled back the layers of our ignorance and revealed a Deity whose concern for human life and whose involvement in human life achieved a new level of intimacy and immediacy.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus taught with authority. And we too have received the authorizing power of God. No longer are we ignorant to the needs of those around us. We have major authority upon the people with whom we live, our neighbors, our family, our friends, the people we know and meet on the street, even our church family and community and especially those that represent us in government offices. We have the authority to make changes in our lives that can bring us into a closer relationship with God, with our families, and our neighbors and we can use our authority to even make changes in the world in which we live. Each of us as human beings and especially as Christians should be concerned about others and work toward improving the lives of others and taking care of the world in which we live. Members of The United Methodist Women have accepted the role of authority and the authority of Jesus Christ in their lives as they lead the way to make a difference in the lives of others.

May we accept the authority that we have been granted in following the teachings of Jesus and the example of our own United Methodist Women. Amen.

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<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann, p. 129.