

**Life on the Inside | Epiphany 4 | 2/3/2019**  
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*Through healings and exorcisms Jesus demonstrates the power of God and his mission to heal and restore this fallen world. May we live in God's Kingdom, extending this work of restoration to our Sunnyvale community!*

### **Introduction**

We're in this series called The Insiders and in this season of Epiphany we've been playing with this idea of what it means to be on the inside of the Kingdom of God. What do we see? What do we learn? We started off by seeing this group of pagan magicians, the Magi from the east, practitioners of the dark arts, being invited by God into the presence of the newborn Christ child. What a crazy way to introduce the Jewish Messiah, gathering pagan Gentiles around him to worship and bring gifts. But it tells us something, doesn't it? Who does God call into His kingdom? Into His presence? Well, he's calling everyone into His presence.

Indeed, He's calling us *by name* into his presence. This is what we saw a couple weeks ago from Isaiah (?). Through fire and flood, God's presence is with us.

We saw that again last week when Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and proclaims that he is the Anointed One. He preaches from Isaiah 61, proclaiming that He has come to fulfill that very prophecy as He sets the prisoner free, releases the oppressed and makes the blind to see.

Last week we heard Jesus speak about what it means to be an Insider, one for whom He has come to set free. Now this morning, we see Jesus act. And Jesus acts in accordance with what he promised. Those who are oppressed by sickness and demons are freed and released. As we wrap up this series, we see that Life on the Inside of God's Kingdom helps us to see more clearly the purpose for which Jesus has come. His actions in Luke 4, backing up his words from our text last week, speak volumes about who Jesus is and what Jesus is doing in this world.

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Our Gospel text from Luke 4 opens when Jesus is back in Capernaum again. Last week he was in the synagogue of Nazareth teaching the people but now he is back teaching in Capernaum. Capernaum is a small fishing town on the Northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. This is where Jesus made his home after John the Baptist died...it was also home to Simon Peter, it's where Jesus plucked Simon from his job as a fisherman and called him to go and fish for people.

You can go to Capernaum today and you can see the ruins of the synagogue in that town. What you would see today is the remains of what is called the "White Synagogue" - so-called because it's made from brilliant white limestone. It's from between 2-4 C. but built on top of the foundation that dates from the C1...the very same synagogue that Jesus entered and taught the people who gathered there, longing to hear the Word of

God and perhaps see something amazing. And indeed, that's what they heard and saw. There in that synagogue Jesus spoke speaking with the authority of God himself and, with a single word, he cast out the unclean demon. The demon tried to speak, knowing who it was the demon was up against. But with a word, Jesus silences it and sends it out.

Just down the dusty road from the synagogue was Simon's house. It's close, probably less than 100 yards. There is a big octagonal chapel built over the site of Peter's house but it's elevated and the ruins of the house are below ground level so there is space between the floor of the chapel and the ruins of Peter's house so you can look down and see the unassuming stones that made the walls of the home.

You can also see Christian carvings on the walls and places where the original structure was expanded to accommodate larger groups for after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The archeological evidence points to the fact that Peter's home would be the site of a first-century church. But before it was a public gathering space for Jesus followers it was simply a home of a man who was desperate. A man whose mother-in-law was suffering and needed healing. This is the very home which Jesus entered and rebuked that fever.

It was here in these real live places where real live people walked with real live hurt and brokenness. People who were oppressed by real live demons...people who were suffering from real illnesses. People who were suffering the effects of living in this sinful world. And to them Jesus comes. In this little, tiny, insignificant town that lies in ruins. Jesus comes. And whereas last week we saw Jesus introduce himself by means of prophecy-fulfillment. In His preaching he identified himself as the Anointed One of God - the One who had come to proclaim liberty and freedom and healing and wholeness.

And in His actions, there he is doing in. In the synagogue and Simon's home, Jesus is just ordering stuff around. He speaks and they obey. He doesn't need to call on God. He doesn't need to invoke someone or something else. He speaks with authority. And things start to happen. People are healed and freed from that which ails them.

So what does this mean? What do we as readers and hearers of the text, make of it? What should we take from Scripture when we see Jesus working the miraculous in such an authoritative way?

Sure, it shows us who Jesus is. He speaks with authority, he commands disease and unclean spirits and they obey. This Jesus *is* the Holy One of God. Even the demons know that. It also show us what Jesus is like. That he's compassionate and caring. He has a desire to bring healing to people's lives. These things are true...but as Jesus performs the miraculous, we are also keyed into His mission and ministry. Why has this Jesus come? What, exactly, did he come to do?

Well it means that Jesus is in charge. It means that God's Kingdom, that is, God's rule and reign has come and is here *right now*. Remember that when Jesus talks about the

Kingdom of God He's talking of the actions of God, the reigning of God in this world. And the Kingdom of God which has come near to us in Jesus means that God is actively working to put the world right once again.

The mission of Jesus is not just one of forgiveness. Yes, he forgives our sins, we've received that gift today as we do each Sunday. But that's one aspect of the big picture of the work of Jesus in the world. Jesus' mission extends even beyond that. And Luke makes it clear to us what exactly that mission in.

Jesus is putting the world back together again. What is broken is being set right. Sickness and disease? Jesus shows us that he has the power to cast them out. Demonic possession? Jesus shows us that even though the devil thinks he might have a foothold, Jesus is going to win. The devil thinks that he can snatch God's children out of the hands of the Almighty, but Jesus shows up and takes them right back. This is the Kingdom of God. The world being put back as God originally intended it to be.

The promise of this text this morning is that creation will not remain broken forever. The promise of this text is that God is actively working against sin and the tidal wave of brokenness it creates. Creation will be put back together by the Creator Himself. We know this because this casting out of the demon and healing diseases, it's all just a preview of what is to come. It's all just a preview of what this world will look like when God has finished his plan of salvation. It's a preview of life on the inside of God's kingdom. Freedom. Wholeness. Peace.

So if you think Jesus' miracles are incredible but they pale in comparison to the miracle of his Resurrection. The work of Jesus this day in the synagogue and Simon's house, they, just like the turning of water into wine, they are signs pointing us forward to the resurrection. And Jesus' resurrection is the key. It's the lynchpin. It's the ultimate assurance that yes, God is indeed making this world right. Not only do sin and disease and the devil have no standing...but neither does death. As we read from the catechism in confirmation last week, death has been put to death.

This is the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus came to preach as he tells the people at the end of the text. I've come to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. And that good news? That the kingdom of God has *come*. It's been inaugurated by Jesus. He's making the outsiders insiders. He's destroying sin, death, and the devil. He's putting it all back together again.

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Just like Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of God to those real live people in that real live place of Capernaum, God's Kingdom comes to us also. It comes in His Word and His Sacraments. As a matter that idea of wresting his children away from Satan shows up, appropriately, in our baptismal liturgy. Actually, it's not in our newer hymnal but it's in Luther's baptismal liturgy so I snuck it back into ours. And in that liturgy is an actual exorcism. Listen to this, I say:

*Depart you unclean spirit and make room for the Holy Spirit.*

I'll be honest, I get nervous when I say that. It's foreign in our country to speak about spirits and demons much less participate in casting them out. But this section is in there for a very good purpose. It's a demonstration of what God is doing in our baptism. For those of us who were born into sin, born into the rule and reign of the Evil One, God is taking us back. He's casting out the devil and taking us back. *His* child. *His* creation. God is taking them back. One baptism at a time...God is showing his rule and reign in the world.

In the sacraments that we celebrate, God shows up. In the preaching and teaching of His word God shows up. But that's not the only way God's rule shows up in the world. God's rule and reign also shows up in the Church, that's you and me, as we go about our lives outside of these four walls.

As you work with SCS to help serve those in need. Working with the Refuge to provide food for the food-insecure in Sunnyvale and beyond. As well as working with the Santa Clara County Cold Weather Shelter.

In our work with Bishop Elementary School we've had the opportunity to fill a need for space and facilities as they finish up their construction project but more than that last and again this year we get the opportunity to support them in their mission to educate the next generation through our participation in Books for Bishop and hosting their family reading night.

As a church we work together in a variety of ways to carry out the mission and work of Jesus in our community. Of course, that's not the only way to do it. Just before Christmas I finished reading a book with a small group of you called *Joining Jesus on His Mission*. The gist of the book is that Jesus is *still* out and about doing what our text this morning describes. Healing, renewing, restoring His broken and sin-stained creation. And guess what? He's inviting us to join him. He's inviting us to join him in our neighborhoods where we interact with a variety of different neighbors who are longing for some kind of healing or relief in their lives.

He's inviting us to walk alongside our coworkers and friends, and anyone else that we encounter. He's inviting us to speak His word, to embody His word, to carry on the healing and redemptive work of Jesus in this world. He's inviting us to show people that God's Kingdom is real. It's here. It's now. And it's putting everything right. Sin, death, disease, despair no longer control us.

## **Conclusion**

Through this series, *The Insiders*, we've been given a glimpse of who this Jesus is and what it means to be an Insider in His Kingdom. He welcomes everyone...he longs for all, even those who seem so far off, to come near to him and receive his grace. He longs to

bring abundance to us, as we saw in Cana. It was a foretaste of the feast to come, that great day of the Lord when sweet wine will be dripping from the hills and flowing from the mountains.

To be an Insider in the Kingdom is to see Jesus for who he really is. The Anointed One. Coming to proclaim Good News and coming to enact in his life and ministry that Good News. God's Kingdom, his rule and his reign, is here. Right here. Right now. We see it when we read of Jesus' healings and casting out of demons. God's Kingdom is on the move, fighting against the forces of sin, death, and the devil. And in Jesus' ministry we see that God's Kingdom is winning. In fact, it has already won. Jesus' resurrection proves it. Sin has been defeated. Death has been put to death. We have been set free. We have life, eternal life, in His name. Amen.