

Sermon
Sunday, July 1, 2018
Mark 5:21-43
Are You Woke?

In today's gospel, Jesus said, "This little girl is not dead, she's just sleeping."

And everyone laughed.

I bet they weren't laughing when that little girl returned to life

"She's just sleeping" said Jesus...and then he woke her up.

So, let me ask you this: Are you woke?

Are you woke?

"Woke." That's what the kids call it these days. "Woke." Looking up the word on urbandictionary.com, I found the definition of "woke" is this: "although an incorrect tense of the word 'awake', woke is a reference to how people should be aware of current affairs."

So. Are you woke?

Are you aware of current affairs? How do you feel about those current affairs? And probably most importantly, what are you doing about the feelings you have about those current affairs?

In today's gospel, Jesus resurrects the young daughter of a very important person – a leader in the synagogue. Jesus wakes her up. And, in turn, I'm sure got the attention of her entire family.

There are other examples of people being told to wake up in the Bible.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he writes this: "everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Wake up, sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

In the 25th chapter of Matthew, we find the familiar parable of the ten bridesmaids. The groom is late for the wedding. Five of the young women ran out of oil for their lamps because they weren't anticipating such a long wait...during which all the bridesmaids fell asleep. The other five had plenty of oil but did not share it with their friends. The half without oil couldn't go to the wedding. But Jesus says the lesson to that parable is "Keep awake!" It isn't "be prepared" or "plan ahead." It isn't "share with your friends." The lesson is "Keep awake." And if you read the story – none of the bridesmaids actually did that.

And in Mark, chapter 13, Jesus tells his friends a story about a homeowner who goes on vacation and leaves his servants in charge of his property. He advises them to remain vigilant because he hasn't decided when he will return home. Jesus concludes the story with these words: "Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come. He may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you, I say to all. Keep awake."

I'll ask again. Are you woke?

In our lives here in Albuquerque, what does it even mean to be woke? What does it mean to be aware of current affairs? And why am I even asking you this question today? I know we all came here to worship. We came to be with our faith community. We came to strengthen our bonds among each other and to get to know people who have recently joined us. We came to get strength and renewal from the bread and the wine – the body and blood of Jesus our Savior.

Sometimes, it seems that here at church on Sunday morning is the only safe place we've got left. The only place we can escape the hustle and bustle of our busy lives. It's the one place we can come and put the cares of the world aside for just a little while.....and breathe.

And now – once again – that pesky Deacon is going to ask you to do something. He's going to bring up something that might make you squirm a little bit in your seat. He's going to ask you to wake up. He's going to ask you to get woke.....and you are correct.

Too often in our lives, we get comfortable. Sure, we hear the news reports and shake our head in disgust. No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, you must think that our country is headed down a wrong path. We are called to civility by politicians who don't seem to even know the meaning of the word, when you look at their own words and actions. Our own state has once again dropped to 50th place when it comes to the welfare of children. Families from other countries attempting to make a better life in the United States have been torn apart – and now we have no idea how or when they can be reunited.

But let's not forget that these current affairs to which we should be woke do not have to be headline-grabbing national news. There are people in the neighborhoods where each of us live who are hungry because they don't have enough money....who can't take care of their own property...who have no friends or family to talk to.

But what does that really have to do with us? Even if we consider ourselves aware – "woke" – what can we do about any of these problems? We live in a bubble, my friends. We get up, we go to work, we take care of our families, we make dinner, we attempt to relax a little bit at the end of the day, we go to bed, and then we do the same thing the next day. I totally understand that bubble. It's all many of us can do just to make it through the day dealing with our own lives.

Being woke is frustrating. It is completely overwhelming. What can I, a single, solitary person with no power do about any of these things happening? I believe not a single one of us is uncaring or unsympathetic. We KNOW something needs to be done. But what? And what can I – personally – do about these huge, seemingly insurmountable issues?

I believe the answer Jesus gives us is to get woke and make sure others around us are woke.

Jesus tell us to wake up.

And don't forget the very last instruction of today's gospel. Jesus tells the people gathered around that little girl to bring her something to eat.

Being woke makes you hungry. You're going to need some energy for what lies ahead.

There is more in today's gospel. A woman who has been bleeding for ten years receives new health and life – energy – by simply touching Jesus' garment. She has been asleep with poor health for a long time. Now she's woke! Jesus knows that power has gone out of him and into her and healed her. She is fed – renewed – by Jesus. Jesus then acknowledges her faith has made her well and tells her to go in peace. We can get the same renewal and blessing from Jesus.

When the leader of the synagogue fears his daughter has died, Jesus tells him “Do not fear. Only believe.” Jesus gives him a morsel of hope – food to get him through what is ahead. We can get that same power and hope from Jesus.

It is my hope that we can all believe that we come here each week to get the food – the power and energy – we need to be woke and stay woke. We get the food from the communion table. We get the energy required from the words of Jesus commanding us to change the world. We get nourishment from each other. We need each other to stay woke.

My friends, Do not fear. Only believe. Your faith will make you woke.

The responses to being woke will vary for each of us. There will be as many different responses to our group woke-ness as there are people sitting in this room. One size does NOT fit all. Jesus calls each to different ministries according to our gifts. Some of us will hit the streets in protests and marches. Some of us will write e-mails and make phone calls. Some of us will collect physical goods needed by organizations that help the problems we see. And still others of us will donate money – in amounts both large and small – to charities which help those in need. Some of us will knock on the door next to ours and ask if our neighbor could use some help. And some will smile at the tired parent behind us in the check-out line.

I have faith that ALL OF US are called to pray on these matters which have woke us up. Those prayers will be for comfort and compassion for those in need.....as well as strength, courage, and patience for us – for the things we feel we need to do.

Being woke isn't easy. It's hard work to stay woke. Taking a nap sounds so much more inviting. But Jesus didn't say "take a nap until the owner of the house returns." He didn't suggest "sleeping while your lamp goes out is an acceptable way to prepare for a wedding." Jesus didn't say "I'm not exactly sure what's wrong with this little girl. Let's just hang out and wait and see if she wakes up when she's ready."

Jesus calls us to get woke! Jesus calls us to stay woke!