

Epiphany 4 B, 2024 – *St Aidan's, The Rev. Juie H. Smith*  
 Deut. 18; 15-20; Psalm 111; Mark 1:21-28

- *“Word about Jesus spread at once,  
 all over the surrounding district of Galilee.”*

If you watch the news a lot, like I do, too often sometimes, it seems we have been hearing a lot about the mishap on the Alaska Airlines plane when the emergency exit door blew off. I understand there was a parody about it on Saturday Night live last week. It was a pretty good one, I saw a clip of it on Facebook.

Talking with my brother the other day, he said they found a cell phone on the ground where the door landed. And it was working find nothing broken. . .  
 That's because it was on airplane mode!

In all seriousness it's amazing that no one got hurt on the plane or on the ground where the door landed. It could have been a lot worse, not to diminish the significance of the incident.

In all the interviews with the officials with Alaska Air, they reported that staff did their jobs keeping passengers calm and safe until the plane could land.

I remember back when the pilot Captain Sully Sullivan made that emergency landing on the Hudson River, the media call it “the Miricle on the Hudson” and hyped up Captain Sullivan as a “hero.”

When the pilot was finally interviewed and asked about his great act of heroism, he responded simply that he and the crew were doing their jobs. He was doing his job and didn't want to make any more of the fact.

He used his God given skills and knowledge his life's work and authority to save so many people and families from disaster. He was doing his job.

All the staff of several airline near misses and more serious disasters were doing their jobs to keep people safe.

In today's gospel passage was Jesus doing his job? Was he testing his vocation or just messing around in the synagogue.

Our Hebrew scripture reading in Deuteronomy, tells us God's great prophet Moses will be followed by another to lead them away from destructive practices and will be someone from among them.

And in the little town of Capernaum a man appears teaching in the synagogue. He is not one of the recognized teachers and begins on his own authority to tell people what God's will is, how the kingdom is coming. Was he some kind of prophet?

The usual teachers –priests and scribes, the literate ones as well those self- appointed, self-guardians of the Jewish ancestral traditions –did **not** teach like this.

Other teachers would say; 'as Moses said,' or as 'Rabbi so and so' said. Jesus spoke with quiet, but compelling authority, all on his own with out citing various spiritual authorities in support of his teaching.

And at the same time, he spoke with confidence and inspiration to heal, to restrain and expel alien powers that possessed some people, making their life a total nightmare. The *spirit* or demon that spoke up that day was called "unclean" because the effect of the condition was to separate people from the worship of God.

Jesus had come to stop the nightmare, to prevent further disastrous living, to rescue people and nations from the destructive forces that enslaved them.

Jesus *was* doing his job.

The job he was just getting started doing.

The job he was blessed by God, on the river Jordan,  
to do.

And, as prophesized, God not only put his words in his mouth but gave him the authority to lead the people.

Jesus was doing what God placed him on earth to do. . . . His ministry of teaching, healing and reconciliation begins in this first chapter of Mark's Gospel.

This is the time of year for annual meetings in our denomination, a time to reflect on the past year in ministry together. And you all, like many others are holding your meeting today.

Knowing you all are still in transition. I recognize there has been a lot of work done to prepare for this time of calling a new pastoral leader . . .

A lot of work goes into preparing to call a new priest.

Calling a new priest is like an arranged marriage.

You know you have been called together for a purpose. A purpose that may look different with a half-time verses full time clergy.

And as you continue to pray and look forward to the next chapter of your lives as a community of faith,

I encourage you to reflect on what God is calling you to now, as you regroup and continue the vibrant ministries you currently offer to one another and the community.

As individuals of a Christian community, you have a job to do.

It is a blessing for me to lead you in worship periodically, to be part of a community of faith doing ministry together during this transition.

Our job as baptized Christians is to continue to learn new and challenging ways to carry on the mission of the church and to reach out to others to share the good news of God's love and forgiveness and endless grace.

Jesus' job is more than a human doing his work on earth. Even more than the Captain Sully's of the world and all those in whom we entrust our lives.

Jesus is the true authority in whom we trust, the one whose authority threatened the authorities of his time.

But as we know, he paid with his own life the price for our safety. On the cross he completes his healing work that begins on this day as he is speaking out in the synagogue.

In our jobs as Christians, let us take time to listen to where we are called and to where and to what we are to put our gifts to work. It may be something new or different or it may be to continue to do what we are already doing.

During these coming months in this season of Epiphany, in this season of God appearing among us and within us, let the hope for a pastor to lead you will be realized in good time. God's good time.

*And as the psalmist says, "let us give thanks to the LORD with our whole hearts . . . He has shown his people the power of his works . . . The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice . . . The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; those who act accordingly have a good understanding; his praise endures forever.*

Be open to finding the thing or things that bring life to your ministries and the community.

And as we learn to speak and to act as followers of Jesus with the same authority, you will be doing your job,  
the job we trained to do from baptism and will continue to train for every day,  
faithfully.

May you be blessed to be doing your jobs together with the same authority that has already been claimed by the loving authority of God—in Christ Jesus.

*Amen.*