

Jesus, Incorporated 1<sup>st</sup> in a series of 5 “The Jesus Enterprise” -- Mark 5:21-43  
2012 Saint Marks UMC 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (July 1) 2012

Today’s text provides the basis of introduction for a sermon series during July, entitled “The Jesus Enterprise.” We are going to look today at the name of that enterprise, “Jesus Incorporated.”

In the next weeks we are going to look at

1. How Jesus Commissions the Staff
2. How Jesus Empowers the Staff
3. How Jesus Shows the Staff the Need for Balance
4. How We Must Remember That It IS Jesus’ Enterprise – not ours

But today – let’s look at the name and the nature of this enterprise. I suspect that there might be some who take exception to calling it “JESUS INCORPORATED.” Some people might prefer to call it “the Church.”

That’s OK. If you want. But let me explain my choice.

In a song from an old 1960’s record album – a record album was a piece of vinyl plastic that was put on a round thing that turned around (called a turntable) and a needle connected to electric was placed into the concentric circles of the vinyl as it turned and it made music. This record album preceded the 8 track tape, which preceded the cassette tape and the Compact Disc (CD) all before MP3s.

In a song from an old 1960’s record album, entitled “We’re Only In It For the Money” – by Frank Zappa ... my wife says that not more than three people in the congregation today will have ever heard of Frank Zappa. I disagreed. She relented and said that perhaps more than three had heard of him, but not more than three people would have liked him, or his daughter Moon Unit Zappa.

In a song from an old 1960’s record album, entitled “We’re Only In It For the Money” by Frank Zappa the first words of the “song” – which are spoken,

not sung – say: **“The first word of this song is DISCORPORATE. It means to leave your body.”**

I say that to remind Frank Zappa fans everywhere that the word **INcorporate** does not merely refer to a business unit, a legal entity called a corporation. The word **INcorporate** can also mean **“to become a body”** like in Corpus Christi – the **BODY OF CHRIST**.

**JESUS INCORPORATED** therefore means: **“INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST”**

And I prefer to use this term **JESUS INCORPORATED** because in a time when so many people in the Church are trying to copy practices of the secular business world to improve the Church, I want people to read, or at least think like the principles in, the book **“Jesus, CEO”** to find out how much the Jesus Model can improve the whole world, business and church, and not the other way around, where we try to turn the Church into Walmart.

So this sermon series is about **JESUS INCORPORATED** – how **WE** are in this special relationship with Jesus. *We don't do it alone.* It's not just **“I go to the Garden Alone, While the dew is still on the roses.”**

***(For those of you unfamiliar with those words, they are from a hymn found on page 314 in your hymnal, and which was wildly popular in the days of the vinyl record album - even more popular than the more enigmatic Frank Zappa.)***

Oh, surely there is a time for private prayer, and time alone with your best friend Jesus. But the relationship to which we live in Jesus is primarily **IN THE BODY OF CHRIST – IN THE CHURCH**. That's what Pentecost was about.

Today's scripture – looked at as a whole – demonstrates the nature of that organism: **JESUS INCORPORATED**.

Without delving deeply into the individual parts, look at it:

1. Boats
2. Crowds
3. Miracles

4. Hurting people
5. People crowding and touching
6. People trying to manage Jesus
7. People desperate enough to try something new
8. An amazingly motley crew of different kinds of people

Yep. That is the stuff and organization of **JESUS INCORPORATED**. It's not neat and it's not tidy.

Jesus had just finished preaching/teaching, and was ready to go home, put up his legs, have an iced tea and watch some re-runs of classic games on the NFL network, and maybe take a nap, when BAM! Up came someone who was desperate for him to go do something really important. And, as Jesus tried to go do that thing, everyone pushed in on Him, and BAM! there's a miracle. And power went out of Him, which He was able to distinguish from all the people jostling Him around. And then he went and raised a little girl from the dead, since He was too late to heal her before she died.

Yep. That the stuff and SOP (standard operating procedure) of **JESUS INCORPORATED**. It's not neat and it's not tidy.

In our worship committee meeting, as we discussed the chaos of all this activity, someone asked: **“How can we make this jumble of events from first century Palestine fit into contemporary understanding of life?”**

**Well, how about look at the last 48 hours?**

Finished work for the week and ready to go home for a nice quiet Friday evening. Then some chores around the house on Saturday and maybe a round of golf. And BAM! there's a storm that knocks out the power for 75,000 people in the county and there are trees that have to be moved and a cooling station that needs to be set up at the church, with volunteers to be recruited and cold water to be secured and why don't we make it pet friendly and invite the pets, but what about the unplanned wedding renewal of vows in the sanctuary with dogs barking downstairs ....

It's not too hard to find contemporary examples of **JESUS INCORPORATED** getting tossed into craziness – on a daily basis.

When you love Jesus. When you are part of the Body of Christ (aka **JESUS INCORPORATED**) **you have to be ready at any given moment to change your plans and reach out to help those in need.**

There are some folks who get a bit uncomfortable with the nature of the specifics in this scripture lesson today. Oh, they don't dislike the miraculous healing that goes on. What makes them uncomfortable is the way the specifics get worked out.

Why did this one woman's healing occur when she touched Jesus. Were there not others in the crowd who needed healing and who also touched Him? And why did this one little girl get healed? I know of lots of children who die from disease and accident and other things, who don't get raised from the dead.

Oh, so you came to church to hear the preacher tell you why some do and some don't and explain away all the questions.

Let me put it this way. (Or, as Jesus used to do: "Answer me this and I will answer your question.") Tell me why the parsonage where Monty and Jane live had lights and air conditioning throughout the storm and afterwards, but the people across the street, and on the same side of the street just one block away were plunged into hot darkness. Monty & Jane were on an island of light and cool I'm a sea of darkness. Why?

Was it because Jane and Monty live **closer to the foot of the cross** than the Ditchens one block away? Don't try that answer on the Ditchens or on Newt and Janet Harman, who not only did not have power when they got home Friday night, and who had to walk the last 1.2 miles uphill to their home, because of the tree limbs blocking their road.

Why some and not others? I don't think that many, if any, here today would say that it's based on living at the foot of the cross.

Do Monty and Jane, if not living a better life style, at least have better faith? My spiritual director lives one block down from me, had a monster tree across her front lawn, and still had no electricity last night.

Could it be that we don't have the answer?

It's OK to experience miracles in life, like those in the Gospel lesson today and not be able to understand why some and not others. I have a hard time even trying to connect the dots to the "FAITH" issue. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that FAITH IS A GIFT. We can't strengthen it. We can only accept it as a gift. That also means that we can't beat ourselves or others up for not having enough of it, if it's not YET been offered to them.

No, here's how it works in **JESUS INCORPORATED**. There are miracles. They don't happen to everyone. If they did we probably would quit calling them miracles, like we fail to pay attention to daily miracles that happen all around us.

Part of the **JESUS INCORPORATED** thing is that we don't get to understand or explain lots of it. But we can still be a part of it.

We can still – when the heavens open, when the illness strikes, when the misfortune strikes, when there is need of any kind – we can still do what **JESUS INCORPORATED** does. We can reach out,

- even when its uncomfortable,
- even when its not always appreciated,
- even when our actions are not always understood.
  - Just because that's the way Jesus did it.
  - Just because that the way Jesus instructs us.
  - Just because that's what the Body of Christ looks like.
  - And ... don't forget to take care of the animals, too. Jesus loves them, also.

Next week, we'll get some of the specifics of the **JESUS INCORPORATED**. In the meantime, come and receive the blessed sacrament of holy food and **BE** incorporated.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.