



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

## **February 5, 2012, Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany**

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Isaiah 40:21–31  
Psalm 147:1–11, 20c  
1 Corinthians 9:16–23  
Mark 1:29–39

### **Introduction**

A powerful message emerges from the passages today that speaks boldly both to those who fight for God's social vision and to those who experience earthly social injustices. Those who are hopeless because of social injustice require a deep and courageous faith. Those who seek to achieve God's righteous and equitable social ends for every human, animal, and plant in the universe need an obedient and selfless faith. Isaiah 40:21–31 reminds victims of social injustices and fighters for social justice alike that only God supplies the patience and strength to endure suffering, and only God is capable of the life-giving ability to transform unjust situations. God's loving and gracious actions in Psalm 147:1–11 illuminate the unparalleled and praiseworthy benefits of God's social vision for both humankind and nature. Paul's willing self-denial to preach the gospel in 1 Corinthians 9:16–23 exemplifies a God-centered (not self-centered) model for intentions and actions essential for achieving God's social vision. Mark 1:29–39 narrates Jesus' selfless acts of healing and then his vital act of self-care that sustains his desire and ability to rectify the social conditions of those who seek him and believe in him.

### **Mark 1:29–39**

In this first chapter of his Gospel, Mark captures a dramatic series of events that illuminates the way Jesus begins to seed his vision of social justice among those whose daily lives were continuous experiences of oppression. Jesus starts with the individual and is drawn to those who are compromised by diseases and demons (v. 34). In the just and loving society that Jesus desires to achieve through his life, all people are healthy, strong, liberated, and whole in their mind, body, and spirit. Jesus is uncompromising in his impartiality and does not discriminate by gender, age, social or economic status, or creed when he touches those who seek to be healed. When Jesus touches and transforms one individual, others are inspired to be touched and healed by him. Thus Mark tells how the whole city gathers around the door to be healed (v. 33). The hallmark of Jesus' approach to social justice is to love and care for everyone, which includes taking care of himself. After healing so many people, Jesus deliberately takes time to steal away and pray (v. 35). This speaks directly to the need for those in social justice ministries to sustain a devotional practice that nurtures their mind, body, and spirit. People active in social ministries sometimes both literally and figuratively bleed on behalf of those they seek to help. Healers must embody the health they seek to help others achieve. In Jesus' self-loving practice, he is cleansed and strengthened by God to continue to face the challenges of ministry. A persistent devotional practice is vital for all who seek to carry on Jesus' work today.