

## Healing the Sick - Mark 1:29-34

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The setting of our story today is a fisherman's house. Mark actually says it was the house of Simon and Andrew. They were brothers as well as business partners. So this may explain why Andrew lived with Simon, who as Mark mentions was married. This picture is close to what a typical house in Capernaum looked like. The walls were made out of baked mud. Perhaps the construction was similar to adobe. (Adobe is made from sand, clay, horse manure and water, with some kind of fibrous material such as sticks or straw. This material is shaped into bricks using frames and dried in the sun.) The floors were made of packed earth. The houses in Capernaum had flat roofs made of rough timbers and reeds/branches plastered with mud. The inside of Simon's house was probably divided into two parts. One part was raised a foot or more above the other. The raised section was used for the women's work and also for sleeping. The family slept on the floor using a rolled-out bed. The lower section had several purposes. It could be used for the family's animals (oxen, sheep, etc.) when they were in need of shelter as well as a place for the children to play. A variety of work might also be done in the lower section such as carpentry or blacksmithing. It was also common to have a stairway going up the side of the house to the roof, which was used for sleeping in the summer.

Now that we have considered the setting for our story today, let's consider the story itself. Here is a summary: *"After leaving the synagogue, Jesus, along with James & John, went to Simon and Andrew's house. Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever. After sunset a large crowd gathered in front of Simon's house. That night Jesus healed many who were sick and demon-possessed."*

We will consider the experiences of two individuals in our story today. The first individual is Jesus. In our story He experienced hospitality. Turn with me to Luke 9:58 (page 917). Someone has volunteered to become one of Jesus' disciples. Jesus responds rather coldly. He tells the man, "I don't have anywhere to lay my head at night." What is He saying? Well, first of all, Jesus was quite a distance from His home in Nazareth – both in our story today and in this story in Luke. Also, Jesus moved around quite a bit. He was like an itinerate preacher. I believe Jesus was telling this man that anyone wanting to follow Him certainly couldn't hope to become wealthy. Since Jesus didn't have His own house to go home to each night, He, of necessity, accepted the hospitality of others. From various references, such as Mark 2:1, we learn that Simon's house was probably the center of Jesus' ministry in Capernaum. It was a place where He was always welcome. And staying here gave Simon and Andrew an opportunity to often be reunited with their family.

So, Jesus experiences hospitality in our story today. He is befriended and made welcome at Simon's house. What else does Jesus experience in our story today? He experiences relieving suffering. For generations people had suffered without hope. There was no known cure for malaria, leprosy, or demon-possession. People with these conditions were often hopeless outcasts, especially those with leprosy and demon-possession. But when Jesus appeared everything changed. People met Someone who sympathized with their suffering. Jesus saw in these people the reason He had come. His sympathy caused Him to feel their pain. Paul describes this in the life of the Christian in Romans 12:15. Jesus wept with those who wept. And when He had set them free from their suffering, He also rejoiced with them. Their joy was His joy.

Now that we have considered what Jesus experienced in our story today, let us consider the experience of Simon's mother-in-law. We don't know her name, but certainly she was a loved one of Simon and Andrew. In Luke's gospel account he uses a Greek medical classification to describe this woman's fever. He says it was a

“great fever”. More literally, he describes it as a “mega fever”. The Greeks had two classifications of fevers. One was for minor fevers and the other was for very high fevers. Since Capernaum is in a sub-tropical climate, it is possible that Simon’s mother-in-law had malaria. As Simon’s mother-in-law is first introduced in our story today, we find her experiencing exhaustion. I remember when my brother and I were working in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area. As carpenters we worked outside. My brother came to work one day with a fever. By lunch time he was shivering uncontrollably. No matter how much he moved around, he couldn’t seem to stop. Thankfully, the Lord answered his prayer and the shivering stopped. He was able to continue working the rest of the day. Shivering itself can be exhausting, but having a high fever saps the body’s strength even more. Mark gives us the picture of this woman being flat on her back. This fever had taken all her energy away. She couldn’t get out of bed.

Another experience of Simon’s mother-in-law in our story today is appropriate physical touch. Jesus was a master at this. Unfortunately, in our society today, physical touch is often violent or inappropriate and results in ruined lives. People who have been battered often never recover psychologically, even if they do physically. Jesus’ touch was appropriate. In fact, it brought healing. It showed Jesus really cared. He treated her like she was His mother.

Simon’s mother-in-law also experienced immediate & full restoration. Mark says the fever left her “immediately”. There was an immediate change in her skin color. The look of death was gone. Jesus had lifted her up with His hand, but now she is standing on her own. Mark also says that she became active. Usually after a fever, it takes a while to regain strength. But such was not this woman’s experience. She experienced full and immediate restoration.

Last of all, Simon’s mother-in-law experienced a heart of service. After being healed, her first act was one of service. The word Mark uses here that’s translated “served” is the same word he used when he mentioned the angels “ministering” to Jesus in the wilderness. This word means to “wait upon”. Perhaps this woman fixed a meal for Jesus and His disciples. She may have naturally been a hospitable person, or this may insinuate that she was also blessed spiritually as well as physically by Jesus’ touch. Perhaps this act of service was outward evidence of a new heart. A heart like Jesus’, which finds pleasure in serving people. At the very least it shows her gratitude to the One who had restored her to full and complete health.

Now that we understand some of what Jesus and Simon’s mother-in-law experienced in our story today, how does this story reveal Jesus as an example of a healthy and dangerous Christian? First of all, this story reveals Jesus as someone who brought healing. Wherever Jesus went, His restoring influence was felt. That Sabbath there was sickness in Simon and Andrew’s house. But when Jesus entered, it was the beginning of the end. Not long afterwards the sickness had left. It was no longer in the house. It was the same with “the whole city” (Mark 1:33). When Jesus came to Capernaum, there was sickness all over the place. But by the end of our story, it’s all gone. It had left every single house in the whole city. Jesus brought healing everywhere He went. I believe a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who brings healing. Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:9 that the Holy Spirit has given some “gifts of healing”. Certainly not everyone has these gifts. But I believe the Lord still has some in His church who do. Through His power healing still takes place. I invite you to turn with me to James 5:14-15. It is believed that this book was written by one of our Lord’s older brothers, whose name was James. (Read) Twice the word “prayer” is used in these verses. Prayer is also mentioned in the previous verse (verse 13). It is mentioned four times in the three verses that follow (verses 16-18). Clearly the context here is prayer. James is saying that healing takes place through prayer. The Lord is still the great Healer. He raises up the sick in answer to prayer. Through our prayers healing takes place.

So, Jesus is an example of a healthy and dangerous Christian in that He brought healing. Second, He is our example in that He met felt needs. Jesus didn't take this opportunity to correct the people's misunderstandings of Sabbath observance. He used this time to meet their physical needs. The reason the people waited until after sunset, to gather around Simon's house was because they believed it was unlawful to be healed on the Sabbath. We can't really blame them. The scribes and Pharisees are the ones who had told them this. It was not taught in the Law or the Prophets. It was a man-made teaching and tradition. But most of the people couldn't read so they depended on their religious leaders to tell them what God expected. When Jesus saw this big crowd of people standing outside Simon's house, He wasn't moved to correct their theology. He realized the importance of meeting their physical needs. In the midst of their suffering, Jesus realized many were unable to understand spiritual things. He realized they didn't care how much He knew, until they knew how much He cared. When He saw this large crowd of people filled with suffering, His heart went out to them. He felt their pain. And He met the physical needs of every single person that was there that night. I believe that a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who realizes the importance of meeting physical needs. A healthy and dangerous Christian doesn't always start with a person's spiritual needs. Often we look for some sign of a spiritual response before we will give someone any physical help. Jesus says the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. If someone is suffering from hunger, the way to reveal God's love to them at that moment is to give them some food, not a Bible study. Some people that Jesus healed that night in Capernaum never received the spiritual healing Jesus offered. But they knew this Nazarene rabbi had done for them what no one else ever had. I don't think Jesus made any distinctions between those who would believe in Him and those who wouldn't. He loved them all the same. So, I believe a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who meets people's physical needs.

I believe this story also reveals Jesus as an example of a healthy and dangerous Christian in that He acted shrewdly. Jesus cast out many demons that night. But Mark says Jesus would not allow the demons to speak because "they knew Him", or a better translation would be, "they recognized Him". In other words, they knew He was the Messiah and wanted to broadcast it. Why wouldn't Jesus allow them to speak "the truth"? I believe there were at least two reasons. First, if Jesus had allowed the demons to announce Him as the Messiah, people would have linked Jesus with the demons. The claim the Pharisees would later make, that Jesus' power to heal came from Satan, would have been given some credibility. John the Baptist had announced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lamb of God. This helped draw people's attention to Jesus as someone who was from God, for John was believed to be a prophet from God. But if the demons would have announced Him, He would have appeared to be a false Messiah. I believe there is a second reason Jesus did not allow the demons to speak "the truth". It would have cut His ministry short. Eventually, His claim to be the Messiah would cost Him His life. But if it had been announced openly early on in His ministry by the demons and everyone who heard them, it would have ended His ministry pre-maturely.

I believe a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who speaks with wisdom. It's someone who doesn't just blurt out "the truth". It's someone who knows when and how to speak "the truth". There's a popular saying in Christian circles these days. The acronym for it is WWJD. Has anyone ever heard of this? Does anyone know what it stands for? "What Would Jesus Do?" right? This question has been popularized from the book [In His Steps](#) by Charles M. Sheldon. It's about a small group of people in a church that decides not to do anything in their professional or personal lives without first asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" When it comes to knowing what Jesus would SAY, I believe we have to ask more than, "what is the truth?" I believe we must ask two other questions. How will what I say be understood? I might say, "You need to get it together." It might be the truth. But it would most likely be interpreted as unkind and condemning. Certainly it would not be a reflection of what Jesus would say. A second question I believe we have to ask in order to know what Jesus would say is, "Will it attract or repel?" If my words turn people away from Jesus or His

church, it doesn't matter if I have spoken "the truth". If my words make Jesus look condemning and impatient, I am more an instrument for Satan than for God. So, I believe a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who speaks with wisdom. It's someone who realizes that being a Christian is more than just speaking "the truth". It's saying what Jesus would say in the way He would say it. Otherwise, we're no different from the demons, who tried to speak "the truth" in our story today.

Capernaum had never experienced a day like this before. This was a Sabbath that many would never forget for the rest of their lives. That night the air was filled with shouts of joy. Many people were set free that night because they brought their problems to Jesus. Today, I would like to invite you to bring your problems to Jesus. You might be trying to ignore them. You might be trying to get used to living with them. But remember what the old song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus", says: "Oh what peace we often forfeit. Oh what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." So today, if you are suffering from an unhealthy marriage, I invite you to come to Jesus. If your money has run out, and you don't know where to turn, come to Jesus. If you are plagued with sickness and there seems to be no cure, come to Jesus. If you are enslaved to an unhealthy addiction and feel helpless to stop, come to Jesus. If you are lost in sin and have no hope beyond the grave, come to Jesus.

The crowd in Capernaum came to the house where Jesus was. Today Jesus is here. He is in this house of worship. So, I invite you to come forward. Come down and meet me here at the front as we sing our closing song. Bring your problems to the Lord. Don't hold on to them. Don't keep looking for help somewhere else. Bring them to Jesus and experience healing. Join me as we stand and sing.