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Matthew 8:14-15

Healing Stories: "Same Job, Different Perspective"

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"Jesus went to every town and village.

He taught in their synagogues and preached the good news about God's kingdom.

Jesus also healed every kind of disease and sickness."

(Mathew 9:35)

Right out the gate, let's deal with two possible distractions in the scripture for this morning, first, Peter was married i.e. you can't have a mother-in-law without having a wife. Later, we even read how she joined him for one of his missionary journeys. Shocker, right! Second, skip the mother-in-law jokes, doesn't apply here!

In two short verses, we get a lot of really important information. So, let's unpack verses 14 and 15 in the order they come to us through today's reading.

The text tells us, that Peter's mother in law (sorry, no name, typical) was "sick in bed with a fever".

This is an example of where the English language does us no favors. The word translated in the Greek/the language of the New Testament for fever means she was seriously ill/deathly sick. In other words, this fever could kill her. It was not like she had the flu with a temperature of 100.1.

Some of us need a big healing because if we don't get healed what we have could kill us or is currently **trying to kill us**.

What falls into that category may be such things as: inability to forgive, revenge and retaliation are sicknesses, how about not dealing fully with one's addiction where it wastes away not only your body, but your mind and spirit as well. We say we have a 98.8 temperature when what we really have is 103.5. I think you get the point. Some of us need things to be different for if it stays the same, it may, if not addressed, lead to a funeral.

Could it be that Peter's mother-in-law had malaria? It would have surely been possible given their close proximity to the mouth of the Jordan River. All I need to say regarding that is mosquitoes!

Some of us have become sick due to **proximity**. What I mean by that is, is that the dis-ease and sickness we are dealing with comes to us via someone else, it is not our fault.

I think this is true for people seeking to recover from abuse. It was the proximity to cruel and hurtful words or being the recipient of demeaning touch or blows of power or dominating and restraining control via another that has wounded us deeply. For those of us in this situation it is good to know Jesus can heal us, as well as he can heal someone who is wounded or ill due to their own actions and decisions.

Next, in the story we hear the phrase "he lifted her up". How strange, yet wonderful that this is the same set of Greek words that the writer of the gospel of Mark has used when he tells of the angel talking to Mary about Jesus' resurrection. In other words, Peter's mother-in-law's healing was like **resurrection**. Really?

Jesus heals in such a way that it brings us new life. That is true, but it is doubly interesting that this phrase shows up in this healing story. In this story, the one healed is returning to the same job she had as before the healing. The interesting thing about being healed by Jesus is that you may return to the same surroundings, but it's a new you. So, you don't do you in the same way because Jesus has touched you and you are **different now**. And in some instances, maybe like this one is, **one's perspective, not circumstances have changed** and that makes all the difference in the world.

During World War II, England needed to increase its production of coal. Winston Churchill called together labor leaders to enlist their support. At the end of his presentation he asked them to picture in their minds a parade, which he knew would be held in Piccadilly Circus after the war.

First, he said, would come the sailors who had kept the vital sea lanes open. Then would come the soldiers who had come home from Dunkirk and then gone on to defeat Rommel in Africa. Then would come the pilots who had driven the enemy planes from the sky.

Last of all, he said, would come a long line of sweat-stained, soot-streaked men in miner's caps. Someone would cry from the crowd, 'And where were you during the critical days of our struggle?' And from ten thousand throats would come the answer, 'We were deep in the earth with our faces to the coal.'"

Peter's mother-in-law had her face to the coal. She got up from her sick bed and she gave that meal all she had. She sweated and served because that's was, what was needed. Yes, she may never get listed at the "top" followers of Jesus, nor placed at the head of the parade line. But, just because she doesn't get that position doesn't mean she doesn't deserve to be there.

Some of us after we have had a life changing experience of healing from Jesus, return to where it seems like we have always been and we think “what difference did that make?” Yet, **Peter’s mother-in-law saw the difference**, if not, she would have told them to go into the refrig. and help themselves or she would have set up a buffet line and said serve yourself.

Instead, we read that she cooked, served, and I assume cleaned-up. Yet, it was very different now, she was not just feeding a group of guys who dropped in to eat her out of house and home because she was the closest house to the synagogue from whence they had come. It was not like they just said, “Let’s go over to Pete’s house and chow down after church.”

No, she was not just providing food for some rough around the edges Galileans, she was giving strength for the journey to those who would be the first to follow Jesus and would later leave a legacy for the rest of us to follow for centuries. She was not just providing a time for small talk around the table. Rather, her serving made it possible for Jesus to fill their eyes, ears, hearts, and minds with teachings that would change them and change the world.

In the spring of 1883 two young men graduated from medical school. The two differed from one another in both appearance and ambition. Ben was short and stocky. Will was tall and thin. Ben dreamed of practicing medicine on the East Coast. Will wanted to work in a rural community. Ben begged his friend to go to New York where they could both make a fortune. Will refused. His friend called him foolish for wanting to practice medicine in the Midwest. "But," Will said, "I want first of all to be a great surgeon...the very best, if I have the ability." Years later the wealthy and powerful came from around the world to

be treated by Will at his clinic, which we know today, simply as the Mayo Clinic.

Peter's mother-in-law was healed and that could have been the end of her story, but it was not. The only other story that mentions her is the one that gives us a hint at how her own healing led to her being part of the healing of others. The story is one in which a paralyzed man heard of Jesus and wanted to be healed by him. But, he could not walk, and they could not even get close enough to Jesus for his healing touch. So, his four friends, went up to the roof, made a hole and lowered him down on a pallet right in front of Jesus. Everyone mentions the four friends, but let us not forget, in whose home this was all made possible – Peter's mother-in-law, serving once again, this time, so others might be healed as she had been healed.

Because of Peter's mother-in-law and what happened in her home in a small Galilean town, we hear now (not once, but twice) of the One who can heal us and bring us new life.

Anyone who would like to receive healing from your wounds and sicknesses inflicted either by yourself or others, can express your desire to receive healing by opening your hands in this time and place, to the healing touch of Jesus as we pray.

Jesus, our Great Physician,
For those who are afflicted due to their own actions or who have been wounded by another's actions and words, we ask for your healing touch for them, so that all who are feeling dis-ease may be made whole. Amen.

