



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Our Gospel reading for today seems to have two different events in it that would make for good sermon topics. The first is Jesus going to Simon's house where his mother-in-law is sick and the second is Jesus going to a lonely place to pray. Both are significant events that we shall look at briefly this morning as they each have a relevance to us today.

First, Jesus is taken to Simon's house. The disciples told Him that his mother-in-law was ill with a fever. The disciples had not been with Jesus long at this point, but they had witnessed his authority over an unclean spirit, which we talked about last Sunday. They had to have been impressed when even a bad spirit listens to Jesus' command and leaves the man. Yet, I suspect that the disciples were still somewhat surprised, a bit confused and astonished at his teaching and at the healing He preformed.

And here they are, at Simon's house where they were offered something to eat by a gracious host. Verse 30 says, "Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once." Notice here that the disciples did not ask nor did they expect that Jesus would heal her. They did not demand anything of their new teacher, but rather just made Jesus aware of her problem. One could say that they had faith that Jesus would take it from there and solve her plight. And as our story goes, Jesus did just that. "He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up." Note here that Jesus went to her.

He was not asked, but he satisfied the faith of the disciples and had the fever leave her. And then she served them. It was an instantaneous healing. She was made well enough to resume her duties of caring for the men in the household and their invited guests.

Notice that we do not know anything about this woman, or her faith. So it was not her faith that made her well. It was all dependant on the actions of Jesus, that the woman was healed of her malady. Jesus took the initiative. Jesus acted to bring His grace to this unnamed woman and make her life whole again.

The mother-in-law was a passive receiver. We don't know if she said anything or did anything to show that she had faith in Jesus or for that matter, even knew who he was. But what is important to note is that after the healing, she got up and went to the kitchen and made dinner. She served Jesus, who had healed her. That to me is the important part of the story, not just that Jesus was the active participant in her healing but that in response to His grace, she served Him. We can learn from this that that Jesus can bring an act of grace into our lives, as well. And our response then should be gratitude that can manifest itself in service to Him and our neighbor. And if we trust as the disciples did, with faith, Jesus will act for us as well.

A short story told by Pastor Zingale goes: "In a textile factory where threads are woven into fabrics there is a sign above the machines: 'If the threads become tangled, call the foreman.' A new employee found the threads on her machine badly tangled. Frantically, she tried to untangle them. The foreman came by and said, 'Why didn't you call for me?' she relied, 'I was just trying to do my best.' Then, very pointedly, the foreman told her, "Doing your best includes calling the foreman."

We do our best when our lives get tangled up and we invite Jesus to be present and help us. A simple story about a small boy that was in a boat with his father. As the young boy looked over the side of the boat, the water appeared dangerously deep. He asked his Dad, "Is the water over my head?" "Yes, son, it is over your head", his father said. Then after a short pause, he asked, "Daddy, is the water over your head?" And the father replied, "Yes, son it is." After a bit more thought the youngster asked, "Daddy, is the water over

God's head?" This one the dad had to think on for a minute. Then he replied, "No, my son, the water is not over God's head."

Yes, Jesus is never in over his head when we come to Him with our floundering. If we have a relationship with Jesus, believe, the assurance will come that He can handle the troubled waters of our lives. He will take it upon Himself to make sure that we have forgiveness, abundant and eternal lives to use to His glory.

And now for the second event in our reading today that comes from verse 35, "In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place and there he prayed." Many times in the New Testament, we hear of Jesus going off alone in a deserted place to pray. If we look back to the original language of the New Testament, we have the word for deserted place as *eremon*. This usually is a word that translates loosely to "wilderness". The wilderness here is a holy place, alive with the presence of God. I have thought for a while that it was not so much that Jesus needed a quiet, peaceful place to collect his thoughts and recharge his batteries, but rather it might have been a time of soul searching to reconcile that He should be focusing on the mission His Father called him to do. Maybe Jesus went out to wrestle with whether he should be taking time to heal people or should he just do His Fathers work of bringing people to the kingdom of God. I think that this struggle is well recorded in Scripture. Does He please the crowds or do His Fathers will. Hugh. . . .

So if this struggle is present in Jesus, you can imagine how much greater the struggle in our own lives. Do we decide to allow Jesus in to our lives and wait for Him to bring grace to our brokenness, or do we want to remain in control, to be in charge and be our own boss? Well, we all know the answer to that one, as we mentioned Paul's quote in last week's sermon from His letter to the Romans; "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." Ch7 vs. 15. We want to let Jesus in, yet we resort to trying to go it on our own. Why do we do that? Yup, you guessed it. We are human after all and our free will does not always lead us to Jesus.

We too need time in our own eremon, our quiet place to talk with the Father and build a relationship that will give us the strength to let go and let God, if you will. Prayer, no matter when or where is the answer. Pray without ceasing is the cry from Paul in his letters to the new church leaders. And yes, some of us do need our own little special, quiet place to let our prayers flow to

God. But remember that God knows what is in our hearts even before it reaches our lips.

So I guess that our lessons for today from this story in Mark's Gospel are that Jesus has done the work for us. He died on the cross to give us abundant and eternal life along with forgiveness of our sins. All we need to do is believe and He will be there to walk with us in the glorious life of ours on earth. And if you have something big in life to do, take time to pray and get your priorities in order like Jesus did. Follow your Father in Heaven's will. God is good all the time. **AMEN**