

First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

February 4, 2018 Smiths Falls

Scripture Readings: Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31 He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. 32 That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. 35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37 When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39 And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Prayer of Illumination: Congregational Prayer: "Our Father"

Our Father, Which Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, On Earth As It Is In Heaven. Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread, And Forgive Us Our Trespases, As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us. And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. For Thine Is The Kingdom, The Power And The Glory. Forever And Ever. Amen

Message: "Serving the Servant"

Introduction:

- The Sunday School Superintendent stood in front of the open session and as she scanned the crowd, she inwardly groaned - HE was back. Sure enough, in the back row, sat the angry looking, loud, overbearing man whom she knew was a soap maker by trade. He had only been coming to the Sunday School recently, but at every visit, he had managed to boom out a loud criticism to anything she said about God -

something for which week after week, she was unprepared. And now, he was back. She said a prayer, and launched into her program that talked about God's love. But with the last note of her first song, she heard his unmistakable voice, louder than ever, erupting from the back of the room. The soap maker, trying to embarrass her, said, "How can you claim that religion is good and valid when there is so much suffering and evil in the world? What good are all the books and sermons that your religion has produced? "All eyes were fixed on the Sunday School Superintendent after his outburst. This time, she was not feeling any fear nor anger but instead felt God's peace and confidence. She motioned for a small child to move through the crowd. "This is Eric," she said. "Eric is three years old. Eric is also dirty from falling before he came to Church this morning. I ask you, what good is soap when Eric and hundreds like him around the world are dirty? How can you pretend that soap is effective?" "What a foolish argument," the soap maker protested. "In order for soap to be effective, it must be used." "Precisely," the Sunday School Superintendent said. "Therefore, in the same manner, if the teachings of Jesus Christ, Our Master and Saviour, are to be effective, they too must be used."

- Did you know that Jesus the Christ wants to be used in your life? Today, I wish for us to reflect on the servant, Jesus, then on those whom He healed who became servants, and finally, on how we are to be servants after God works in us.

Part 1. Jesus the servant

- I cannot help, as I read this passage from Mark's Gospel, chapter one, but to get an overriding sense of fatigue. Jesus seems so busy - this is still early in His ministry - His fame has quickly spread, and everyone who is sick wants a chance to get to Jesus, Mark 1:32 says: *"That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him."*
- For centuries, the Hebrews had accused God of not caring, of not knowing their troubles or injustices. This is still the case today - where was God when... Over and over, the Hebrews are recorded as raising a lament, or cry, to God about their problems of despair - and commonly they complained that God does not hear them.

- Ironically, in nations around the Hebrews, pagan worshippers had the opposite problem - the false-gods and idols which they worshipped not only did not care for the people, but did not try to care for them. In fact, these false gods were not expected to care for the people. Instead people were to be the play-things of these false-gods. People created only to serve the whims of the gods. This has not changed today for our world.
- God, the Lord God, Jehovah, the great I AM demonstrated over and over the fact that He cares for everyone. Our God cares for individuals. Our God cares for all who have ailments, all who call on him in their distress. Over and over again, our God has demonstrated how much He tenderly cares for those whom He created.
- Keep in mind that Jesus came to the earth for many reasons, one of which was to demonstrate the loving-care of God. As an act of compassion, Jesus made sure that part of His ministry was to care for the immediate needs of those around Him - both the spiritual needs, and the physical. Therefore, He heals those whom He meets.

Part 2. Healed, Then Serves

- In Mark 1:30 the mother-in-law to Simon Peter had a fever. Now today, a fever is serious, but relatively easy to be controlled with medication.

But back then, a fever was often deadly. In his commentaries, William Barclay tells us that in the time of Jesus the remedy for a fever was to take a knife made of pure iron, and tie it to a thorn bush by a braid of hair. Then on three consecutive days, the words of Exodus 3:2-5 are to be read a verse at a time. Personally, I prefer a couple Tylenol.

- In Mark 1, Jesus has just finished in the synagogue. I know how tired I am after a Sunday morning, so Jesus goes to the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John to rest and restore Himself after a long morning of speaking and healing. But after they enter the house, verse 30 tells us of the concern over a sick mother-in-law.
- Let's stop right there. Simon and Andrew walk into their house, and they find that Simon Peter's mother-in-law is sick. Please notice what they did next - they did not run up to see her, they did not lament their situation, they did not turn and run for fear of themselves getting sick - instead they immediately turned to Jesus with the problem. Very simply, it says in verse 30, "*...and they told him about her at once.*" You never know what you will face every day. You never know what will be the focus of your attention when you go to bed at night. You never know what lies just around life's corners. When these things happen, do as

Andrew and Peter did, and AT ONCE turn to Jesus.

- What is the response of Jesus? Immediately, Jesus came to her "*...and took her by the hand and lifted her up (verse 31).*" Jesus uses His touch to heal her, just as His touch still heals today. "*Then the fever left her.*" Amazing. It is just that simple. Now I am not naive, and I realize that not everyone gets better just like Simon's mother-in-law, that often healing takes a long time, or requires help from the Doctors whom God sends, or medicine, OR that sometimes the healing that we need is the healing of our souls to be able to accept our disabilities, but I also have faith that Jesus Christ is the healer, that Jesus Christ can and will cure all ills, that Jesus cares and will help those who cry out to Him.
- Many of us have been touched by Jesus. We too have been strengthened by our Lord, and our physical, spiritual or emotional lives are healed by The Saviour's touch. Many of us are walking miracles of Jesus Christ's power to cure us of the afflictions of life. But Jesus heals with an expectation - the expectation is seen in this story from Mark's gospel.
- Let me finish verse 31 of Mark chapter one, "*...and she began to serve them.*" Simple, isn't it!?! Jesus cured the woman, and now, after her affliction is gone, she thanks a very tired Jesus by serving Him. Now

that her body has been restored, she can minister to others. Now that Jesus has used His power to reach her, to cleanse her of the disease, now that she is restored, Jesus is rewarded by her service back to Him.

Part 3. We, the servant

- So, here we are. Gathered here today in this Church, a Church dedicated to our Lord. We have gathered hoping to get a glimpse of our inner self, hoping to get a glimpse of God, hoping to take a part of God's Word home with us. How does this message apply to us?
- I know that in each life here today, God has worked. I know that each of us has been touched in the same way as was Peter's mother-in-law. I know that Jesus Christ has worked in each of our lives, and He has given us renewed physical strength when we were sick. It is Jesus who has renewed our souls when we were down. He has breathed new life into our spirits when we were no longer able to continue. I know that Jesus has worked miracles in each of our lives, and has answered prayers lifted to God in times of need - prayers for renewal - prayers of hope, prayers of faith - prayers of direction - prayers of peace - prayers of healing, prayers of guidance - prayers for yourself, prayers on your behalf, prayers for those in need - AND your being here today is a sign

that God's miracles do work.

- All us "miracles" have been given the same tasks as Peter's mother-in-law - we too must now do as she did - AND SERVE JESUS. The world needs us. The world needs to see us thanking God for what has been done in our lives. The world needs to see us facing our struggles, facing the opposition, facing our day-to-day existence only with the help of Jesus.
- All of us, like Simon Peter's mother-in-law, are called to serve Jesus Christ in our own way. We are all called to put a face on Jesus for the world to see. We are all called to put legs on the Church to move the Church into people's lives. We have a calling to put a heart into the world which needs to be lifted above its pain. We are called upon to put our breath into the Word of God to make it alive for others to see - We are all called to SERVE JESUS.

Conclusion:

- On Christmas of 1987, a nine year-old received an incredible present, one which made him very happy. Born with Cerebral Palsy, his family had sold enough aluminum cans that he was able to buy a high-tech wheelchair - and while this is a great story, it does not end there. Our

story, just as Peter's mother-in-law, carried on. He and his family continued to raise money - they continued to fundraise to help others.

- Before we come to this table, ask yourself this: Are we ready to be a servant - tirelessly doing God's work, attending to the needs of others now. We too are called to do as Peter's mother-in-law and help others. We too are called to serve Jesus. Remembering what God has done in our lives, and the gifts from Jesus which strengthen us, we too are asked to serve - that is, we too are asked by Jesus Christ, to serve as The Servant served.