

Bible Study Guide: Week of 2-1-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Mark 1:29-39

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And 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.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

This scene takes place immediately after Jesus' first public teaching and exorcism that we read about last week in the Gospel lesson. After the service in the synagogue at which Jesus cast out a demon and taught "with authority," he goes with his disciples to the home of their extended family. From this passage, we understand that Simon Peter was married. Jesus' healing here of Simon's mother-in-law not only prompts the woman to respond in gratitude, it also restores her rightful role as chief matriarch of the extended family. She is made well not just in body, but reestablished in the community, as well.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And 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.

Jesus' healing, along with his exorcism earlier, sets off a frenzy in Capernaum. The whole town shows up to get a glimpse of Jesus and to receive healing from him. Faithfully, the people wait until after sunset (the end of the Sabbath) to come to request healing for their loved ones. Jesus once again demonstrates mastery over the demons. This time, he does not allow them to speak. The demons perceive who Jesus is. Such a revelation could be detrimental to Jesus' ministry—after all, who wants to have demons do "press releases" for them? As we saw last week, ironically, it is the demons alone in Mark's gospel who actually know who Jesus is. Thus his refusal to let them speak plays into the so-called "messianic secret" motif in Mark's gospel. That is, in Mark, Jesus always asks people not to tell about him or his works. They invariably ignore his request and tell others. This continues until the very end of the gospel when the young man dressed in white at the tomb commands the women to go and tell that Jesus is risen. Shockingly, the women go home and say nothing to anyone because they are afraid. (See Mark 16)

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

As he does two other times in Mark, Jesus here withdraws to pray in a deserted place. Upon learning that "everyone was searching for him," Jesus resolved to move on to do ministry elsewhere in Galilee. Rather than spending all of his time in one place, Jesus decided

to spread the message of the gospel ever wider. We can be sure that fame and fortune in Capernaum would have been a tempting choice, but Jesus is faithful to his mission here.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. If you were Simon's mother-in-law, how do you think you would have served Jesus upon being made well? How might God be calling you to such service even now?**
- 2. Why do you think Jesus wouldn't allow the demons to speak?**
- 3. What lesson(s) can we learn from Jesus' decision to withdraw from the crowd and go to a solitary place to pray? What about from his decision to abandon the ministry in Capernaum in favor of another approach?**