

Our Lord Healed at Sunset and Prayed at Sunrise

Mark 1:29-39

Mark 1:29-39 – *“Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. ³¹ So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.*

³² At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

³⁵ Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. ³⁷ When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” ³⁸ But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” ³⁹ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.”

Background Notes

Verse 29 says that when the Lord left the synagogue at Capernaum, He went into the house of Andrew and Simon, along with James and John. Peter and Andrew lived at Capernaum at this time. Jesus and the disciples were probably going to the home of Simon and Andrew for a meal after Sabbath services in the synagogue - kind of like what we do after Sunday services – we come home for a meal.

A number of archeologists believe they have actually located Peter’s house in Capernaum. You may wonder, “How could archaeologists know that they’ve located Peter’s house?” Well, when they excavated the area outside the synagogue at Capernaum, they uncovered some 1st century houses, and over one of those homes they found the ruins of an octagonal-shaped Byzantine church. (Byzantine times began in the 4th century AD, after the Roman persecution of Christians ended.) Why would the Christians at that time have built a church over a house unless it was an important home? Excavating beneath the ruins of the church, the archaeologists found that the 1st century home had Christian symbols on the walls, showing that most likely the Christians of Capernaum met here. So, putting all the findings together, a pretty good case can be made that this was very likely Peter’s home, and the early church in Capernaum met there.

Peter was married, because the Lord healed his mother-in-law (v30). I Corinthians 9:5 says that the rest of the apostles were married as well. The idea of a “celibate priesthood” is unknown in the Bible.

Verse 32 says, “*At evening when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick, and those who were demon possessed.*” You might wonder, “Why did they wait till evening? Why didn’t they come during the day?” Well, remember, this was the Sabbath day (v21), and according to the laws of Judaism, you couldn’t carry burdens on the Sabbath. The Sabbath ended at sunset, so the people came when the Sabbath was over, bringing the sick with them. Verse 33 says that “*the whole city was gathered together at the door.*”

“*Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak because they knew Him.*” We’ve mentioned this before, but it bears repeating. The Lord wanted people to come to Him by faith. He wanted them to show faith in Him in view of **what He said** and **what He did**, but **not** on the basis of the testimony of demons. The Lord wanted His identity as the Messiah to be revealed on **His** timetable, not on Satan’s timetable.

In verse 38 the Lord said, “*Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.*” This statement heralded the beginning of one of our Lord’s tours of the Galilee, in His great Galilean ministry.

Doctrinal Points

1. There is a distinction between physical sickness and demon possession.

The Bible certainly teaches that there is a distinction between physical illness and demon possession. Look at verse 32: “*They brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed,*” and also verse 34, “*Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.*” This point needs to be emphasized because there is a tendency for some Christians to go to one extreme or the other.

One extreme, of course, is to deny that there is such a thing as demon possession, and to believe that every ailment is merely physical sickness. Well, that’s an unbiblical position. There **is** such a thing as demon possession today, just as in the Lord’s day. We need to recognize that certain human spiritual, mental and physical problems may be caused by demonic possession or oppression.

The other extreme, of course, is to attribute every disability or illness to demon possession. This certainly is unbiblical. A person may be physically sick, and that illness has nothing to do with demon possession. Some time ago I observed some Christians who were trying to cast out a “cold demon” out of a person. The person was sick with a cold, and a virus caused that cold – not a “cold demon”! Notice again the distinction that is clearly made in verses 32 and 34. **The Bible makes a distinction between physical sickness and demon possession.**

2. The Lord Jesus placed a priority on preaching.

Notice what the Lord said in verse 38: *“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.”* Preaching and teaching was the Lord’s purpose in coming to this earth – it was why He “came forth from God.” Here the disciples were looking for Him because the crowds wanted Him to come back to Capernaum. Notice first what the Lord didn’t say! He didn’t say, “Well, let’s go into the next towns so I can heal some sick people there as well, and cast out some demons there as well, because that’s why I came to earth.” No! He said, *“Let us go into the next town that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.”*

The Lord Jesus did heal the sick, and He did cast out the demons, but **He placed a priority on preaching.** We need to do the same. There are many needs around us—physical needs, social needs, all kinds of needs—but we need to place a priority on preaching. What good is it to just make a person more comfortable on the road to hell? We need to preach the good news about Jesus - as well as meet physical needs.

Practical Applications

1. We are healed in order to serve.

Verse 31: *“So the Lord came and took her [Peter’s mother-in-law] by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.”* Here we certainly catch a glimpse of our Lord’s sympathy and tenderness, in the way He dealt with people. Notice that this was no partial cure, or just a beginning of a healing process. Healing was immediate – it was certainly a miracle!

Maybe you’ve been healed from an illness. Are you serving the Lord in some way now? When Peter’s mother-in-law was healed, she began to serve the Lord immediately. Maybe you came close to death at some time in the past, but God restored your life. What are you doing now to serve the Lord?

When I was 12 years old, I became very ill with polio. And as I lay paralyzed in a hospital isolation ward, I wondered if I was going to die. I was already a Christian, and I don’t think I was afraid of dying - but at the age of 12, I really didn’t want to die. Well, the Lord healed me completely. I remember walking out of the hospital under my own power, and as I walked across the parking lot without any paralysis, I remember thinking, “Wow, God healed me! He healed me completely! How can I ever thank Him? How can I serve Him?”

As the Lord raised Peter’s mother-in-law and she then served Him, so we may be raised up so we can serve. Let’s thank the Lord, and let’s remember – **we’re healed in order to serve.**

2. Let's find a place and make a time to pray.

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Probably the Lord got up around 4AM - and remember, the day before had been long and busy, because He was busy in ministry after sunset the previous day. But the Lord was the perfect Man, and He is the model for us to follow, and early in the morning the Lord found a place and made the time to pray. Maybe He walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee in the dim light before sunrise. What a wonderful setting and time for prayer!

We need to find a place and make a time to pray. You can call it your quiet place and quiet time. We're all busy, but we need to find that place and make that time - a time and place where we can get away from our normal activities and devote ourselves to prayer.

It doesn't have to be at 4 o'clock in the morning! In fact, it doesn't even have to be in the morning. But, on the other hand, what could be better than starting the day with prayer, in communication with the Lord? Maybe your home office could be your special place. Or maybe the family room - when no one else is there. Maybe it could be a rest area or park where you can stop on your way to work; maybe it could be outdoors at your home. And it's not a bad idea, by the way, to turn your cell phone off! Whenever and wherever it may be, **let's find a place and make a time to pray.**

3. Sometimes we must say "No" because of priorities.

The particular point of this practical application is saying "no" to some areas of ministry because of priorities in other areas. What did the Lord say when they were looking for Him because there are so many needs at Capernaum? In essence He said "No! Let's go to the next town so I can preach there too. That my priority - that why I came to earth." The people of Capernaum wanted to listen to Him preach, but it seems that even more they wanted to feel His healing touch. They were not against Him, and they certainly did have needs. The Lord cared about their needs, and He cared about them, but His priority was teaching and preaching. Although He was concerned about them, the Lord said "No" because of His priorities.

Sometimes we too must say "no" - even to ministry opportunities - because of our priorities. I've had to say no to some areas of ministry that I'd really like to be involved in, for the sake of getting the radio ministry, Talks for Growing Christians, off to a good start. We strongly believe that should be my priority right now.

You, too, may sometimes have to say no, even to areas of ministry, because of priorities. Perhaps your priority right now is spending with your family. Raising your children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" is a top priority, and thus you may have to say no in other areas of ministry, at least for a period of time. It's not that we don't care, or that we're hard-hearted or unconcerned about the other needs around us - but we can't do everything! Even our Lord said "no" to certain needs around Him because of His priorities. **Sometimes we must say "No" because of priorities.**