

# “SAVED TO SERVE”

**Rev. Becky Stephens**

**Text: Mark 1:29-39 (NLT)**

**God’s Word: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 (NLT)**

## **Mark 1:29-39 (NLT)**

*<sup>29</sup> After Jesus left the synagogue with James and John, they went to Simon and Andrew’s home. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. They told Jesus about her right away. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her bedside, took her by the hand, and helped her sit up. Then the fever left her, and she prepared a meal for them. <sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset, many sick and demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door to watch. <sup>34</sup> So Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases, and he cast out many demons. But because the demons knew who he was, he did not allow them to speak. <sup>35</sup> Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. <sup>36</sup> Later Simon and the others went out to find him. <sup>37</sup> When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” <sup>38</sup> But Jesus replied, “We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came.” <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons.*

In November of 2010 a wedding party was unexpectedly called into action right after the ceremony. While they were posing for pictures on a scenic ledge, a woman who was not involved in the wedding fell into the water and started drowning. Dressed in his tuxedo, the best man jumped in and brought the woman back toward the shore. Then the bride, who was a trained nurse, waded into the water and started giving the lady CPR. By the time the ambulance got there, the woman had regained consciousness. After the daring rescue, the drenched but heroic best man and the bride happily went back to the wedding reception. This unusual event serves as a great image for the calling of every Christian and every Church.

Our Gospel Lesson for this morning picks up where we left off last week. Jesus has just cast a demon out of a person in the synagogue in Capernaum. He leaves the place of worship and heads to Simon Peter’s house with four of His disciples.

Perhaps they are going to Simon's house in order to get some rest, or have something to eat. It is, after-all, the Sabbath. Whatever the reason for going there, when they arrive at the house, they find Simon's mother-in-law in bed and sick with a fever.

Then we are told that Jesus *"went to her bedside, took her by the hand, and helped her sit up. Then the fever left her, and she prepared a meal for them."* The verb translated as "helped her sit up" or "raised her up" is the same word used to describe Jesus' Resurrection later on in Mark 16:6.

In other words, the healing of Simon's mother-in-law can be looked at as a metaphor for Resurrection or Christian Conversion!!! When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior we are raised to new life in Christ, to new purpose in Christ!!! Or to put it more accurately, we are raised to live the life we were created to live in the first place!!!

To quote a colleague, "There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born, and the moment you realize why you were born." Do you know why you were born?

Before Jesus healed and saved her, Simon Peter's mother-in-law had a fever...she was sick...she was immobile. And isn't this, in a sense, the way we all are before we come to know Christ? We could pretty much say that this entire world is "sick in bed with a fever." We are paralyzed and unable to do what we are created to do. And we are also unable to concentrate on anything other than our sickness.

Isn't that how you feel when you are sick and in bed with a fever? You don't feel like doing anything. And all you can think about is how miserable you feel. All you can think about is yourself. We live in a self-absorbed culture.

People are sick with the fever of un-fulfillment. And so they run after all kinds of remedies in order to try and treat their sickness. Some run after money and materialism, but the fever remains. Others become involved in addictive behaviors, but these things only make them more and more sick.

Olivia's class is studying calendars. It's hard for her to grasp the concept of days, weeks, months and years. So, one day last week Liv and I spent the better part of an afternoon working on this. In trying to teach her that Sunday is the first day of the week, I suggested that she remember that Sunday is the day we go to church.

And the reason we go to Church on Sunday is because Jesus rose again on the first day of the week. And then I said that Sunday, or the first day of the week is also the first day of creation.

And because of Christ, it is now the first day of re-Creation!!! For God began creating the world on a Sunday, and God recreated a sick and fallen world on a Sunday as well!!! Has your life been re-Created in Christ?

This is when we begin to realize why we were born, and begin the most exciting of journeys!!! The Resurrection of Jesus Christ working itself out in our individual lives is the moment when the fever breaks, the sickness subsides and we get up out of bed!!!

This is what happened to Simon Peter's mother-in-law. Notice that when the "fever left her," she got up and began to "serve." And this is what happens when we are raised to new life in Christ. We are finally able to stop focusing only on ourselves, and we are freed to concentrate and begin to serve others.

I understand that in Egypt there is an abandoned graveyard which is located at the end of a garbage-lined alley. And one tombstone in that graveyard is that of William Borden, heir to Borden's Dairy. William was a millionaire by the time he was 21, but he gave nearly all his wealth to missions. His heart's desire was to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to persons living in China. On his way to China, William stopped in Egypt in order to study Arabic, but 4 months later he got spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25.

After describing his love for Christ and his commitment to and his love for people who do not know Christ; and his sacrifices for God's Kingdom; the inscription on Borden's tombstone ends with: "Apart from faith in Christ there is no explanation for such a life." What is the explanation for my life...for your life?

It has been said that Simon Peter's mother-in-law was Jesus' first servant who joined Christ in the radical announcement, through her actions, of the Kingdom of God!!! Nobody had to teach her what she had to do. She, like the rest of us was "saved to serve."

It's interesting that Simon and the other disciples won't understand this until after Jesus has been Resurrected and the Holy Spirit has been poured out on them at Pentecost. Instead of wanting to become servants of one another, they vie for "position" in God's Kingdom. And they didn't understand what Jesus meant when He told them that *"the Son of God came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Simon's mother-in-law, on the other hand, appears to understand this...and in many ways, she, deep down is already a Christian...so early on in Christ's ministry.

As Paul writes of those who believe and are saved by God's grace: *"God [raises] us up and [seats] us in the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus."* Again, after Simon's mother-in-law is "raised up" she serves. And this is how Jesus Himself lives and this is what all of Jesus' followers are called to do as well!!!

How are we doing at serving one another and the world? When we serve others, we are not only expressing freedom from the sickness of self-absorption, but we also are being blessed just as much as or even more than those we are serving.

We come to know Christ through serving others!!! We grow in our knowledge and love for Christ by serving others. Remember, that Christ tells us *"Whatever you have done for the least of these...you have done for me."*

Mother Teresa, a person who lived her life striving to be a servant of Christ had a prayer that went like this, "O Jesus...grant that, even if you are hidden under the unattractive disguise of anger, of crime, or of madness, I may recognize you and say, 'Jesus, you who suffer, how sweet it is to serve you.'"

We truly are "saved to serve." In some ways, that unusual event where the best man and the bride at the wedding jumped into the water and saved the woman who was drowning, can serve as a great image for the calling of every Christian and every Church. As the Bride of Christ, we are dressed up for a party, but at the same time we're also to dive into service, even when it's inconvenient and dangerous.

Praising God and loving others through humble service is the natural reaction to being healed, saved--Resurrected by Christ!!!

As we prepare to partake in Holy Communion, let us remember that it is only through the ultimate gift of service that we are saved!!! It is only through the broken Body of Christ...the shed blood of the Son of God on that horrible Cross...that we are healed and enabled to realize for what purpose we were born!

Praise God! Amen.