



Borders Mission Circuit

Part of the Methodist Church of Great Britain



The **Methodist** Church 

Dear Friends in the Borders Mission Circuit

Message for 18th October 2020

Healing & Service

Mark's gospel is the one in which we get so many instances and stories of Jesus healing people from a variety of different ailments that they are afflicted with. No sooner have we heard about the start of his ministry, a brief account of his temptation in the desert and the calling of the first disciples, the fishermen Simon and Andrew, we are then thrust into the stories of Jesus performing miracles of healing. The first is the healing of the man possessed with an evil spirit. There in the synagogue, in front of the crowds to whom Jesus was teaching, he casts out the demon. As soon as this done, Jesus and his group make their way back to Simon and Andrew's house to find Simon's mother-in-law has taken to her bed with a fever.

Reading: Mark 1: 29-34

Can we imagine the scene? Simon, Andrew, James and John arrive at the house with Jesus. This is a home where generations have probably lived side by side. Whole families, grandparents, parents and children would all live together – no doubt often getting under each other's feet and on each other's nerves, but still, this is how it was in those days!! But this was no ordinary home. It was a business, for the family were fishermen and the paraphernalia of fishing would be all around them. There would be nets hanging around in the backyard, drying out or waiting to be mended. Baskets of the previous day's catch would be lying around and beginning to smell. And if this wasn't enough to contend with, here was a family that was to find itself in turmoil. The events of the past few days had had a great effect upon this group. Suddenly, this Jesus character had come into their lives and things were never going to be the same again.

Two of the family had already missed a day's work having gone to the synagogue with Jesus. It would seem that Simon and Andrew had already made their minds up to leave the family and follow a new way of life as one of Jesus' disciples. The whole sense of family life is disintegrating and the matriarch of the family, Simon's mother-in-law, has taken to her bed with a fever. Some may say this was a bit melodramatic but perhaps we should ask the question was this psychosomatic or a real illness? *What do you think?*

But in this story, there is another woman who has a part to play and yet she is not mentioned – she is Simon's wife. What an unenviable position to be in for this woman. Here she is caught between her husband and her mother. Not only did she have the dilemma about, on the one hand, being loyal to her mother and trying to understand her mother's fears as both family life and their security were being endangered by Simon and Andrew's desire to go off and follow Jesus, but on the other hand, she was also struggling to understand the pressure on her husband. So, she has this struggle going on inside her mind. Who is she to stand in the way of God's call on Simon's life? But where does that leave the family? Does any of this sound familiar for people in today's society?

With the ever-changing economic climate we are forced to live with today, more and more families have to live with either a dad or a mum having to work away from home. How do they manage to cope with such strains on the marriage and family life? If any of you watch the Children in Need charity programme and listen to the stories that are told there, I am always so humbled to hear the stories of carers who have to take care of family members, parents looking after children and children looking after parents, some from a very early age. What kind of lives do so many of these people have as they dedicate themselves to their work of caring for those whom they love? As we continue to embattle the dreaded Covid19 virus, we know that there are many who are struggling with mental health problems, questions about how they can provide care for their older relatives or staying at home to look after children.

But here in Capernaum, this is the situation that Jesus walks smack bang into the middle of. But as he does so, He grasps straight away just what is going on and he heals it. Jesus we are told, *'took her hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her'*. But it doesn't stop there. She doesn't just spend some time recovering – no, she immediately gets up and starts to serve them. Can you imagine the situation? No convalescence for her, but straight up and into the usual routine of looking after the guests and the family.

Jesus' healing has allowed Simon's mother-in-law to move on. In that brief moment, Jesus has helped her to come to terms with the fact that their family will never be the same again. But she also found that with God's guiding she has found a way to continue with life. As a family they were never going to be able to go back to where they were before. They have to find ways of moving on. This is the great thing about the healing nature of God. When his healing is complete, people become transformed into a new way of being. Not only is their affliction gone – the demon cast out, the ill made well, the leper cleansed, but the whole person is made new in the love and power of God.

In all our relationships with God, it is this that always amazes me – how God can take the situations in which we find ourselves in and somehow manages to use them such that we emerge stronger and more ready to do His work. Time and again, as Jesus healed a person, they were changed. Their lives were never going to be the same again – how could they? One minute they are struck down by some terrible disease or tormented by an evil spirit and the next they are cured and able to return to normal society. Not the same as they were before – the same person may be, but they were certainly different. God had taken them and transformed them into new people.

And so it is with us. God can take us for who we are - and he does. He takes us with all our imperfections, all our sins, all our distress, all our doubts, all our hopes, and transforms us to be new people – to be his people. This is the power that he has. Through Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection, so we have been given a great new opportunity to find new life. Sometimes, I am sure that we find ourselves feeling a bit like Simon's mother-in-law – totally overwhelmed by what God is doing in our lives – not sure where he really is leading us. Sometimes I'm sure we wish we could take to our beds rather than let God take us by the hand and lead us in new directions. But we must have the commitment to trust him and he will indeed make us new people through Christ. He will transform us from the old to the new.

Every blessing,

Rev. Robert.

On behalf of Rev Ann, Rev Nicola, Deacon Sam & Rev Pete.