

“Saved to Serve”

Mark 1:29-39

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So He went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but He would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for Him, 37 and when they found Him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” 38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39 So He traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

If I were to try to summarize this passage in as few words as possible, I would say, “Jesus heals, Jesus prays, Jesus preaches, people serve, He moves on.” I consider Jesus to be our one and only perfect example. He is the only person ever to live on this earth a life completely without sin. That is amazing, compelling, and a pretty high recommendation, wouldn’t you say? Let’s pay special attention to Jesus’ example this morning.

“Awwh come on, Pastor Rick! Yes Jesus was a person but He was also God. Jesus could heal people but He doesn’t expect us to.” What I would like to make clear today, what I would like to erase from our minds today is the notion that all of the healing that goes on in this world is some kind of spectacular, miraculous, work only for those who are especially gifted or unusually equipped. Mother Theresa said, “If the world is looked at just through our own eyes and only from our own way, naturally, we ourselves can do nothing. But, IN CHRIST, we can do all things. We give it to the Lord, we serve the Lord and His creatures and creation, so we try to do it as beautifully as possible. It is similar to the contact we have with Christ in the Sacrament. There we have Jesus in the appearance of the bread and juice. But in the slums, in the broken bodies and/or spirits, in the children, we see Christ and we touch Him.” You and I may be called by Jesus to reach out, give that healing touch, and lift someone up. For instance **think** back over your own life and consider the times when you have been the beneficiary of a quote “healing” touch. Those times when you have been taken by the hand, lifted up, and restored to life through the good efforts of somebody who cared enough to be concerned about you, to witness to you. More than likely, that healing touch came not through Jesus Himself, but through one of Jesus’ disciples, with skin on. People like you and me.

grasping greed, and fevers of lust are drained away. Drawn away by our escape key, Jesus Christ. **[Note 2]**

Toward the end of the passage we read that Jesus came to preach the gospel and that He preaches with authority. Now this is what astonished the people because He spoke as though He was the author. He didn't quote other Rabbis or other theologians. He had inherent authority that commanded respect. But Jesus keeps getting distracted by human need. Jesus kept allowing himself to be distracted by human need throughout His life. Our text ends with the words, "He traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons." Jesus never lost His compassion for people in need. We should take that as a hint. We are called by Christ to not let ministry, busyness, life, or anything else get us to the point where we forget to care about people and their needs. Remembering the compassion of Christ comforts us in our difficult times and also serves as our commission as disciples. As followers of Jesus Christ we need to love and care about people. **[Note 3]**

Jesus heals, Jesus preaches, and Jesus prays. Verse 35 makes it very clear that prayer was a priority for Jesus. He got up and went to a place to be alone in prayer with His Father. Jesus went out of His way to make time to get alone with His Father in prayer. Prayer was a priority for Jesus. That is why we have a prayer meeting the fourth Wednesday of every month. Prayer is one of our first priorities as far as our Core Values here at Voice of Hope. My first sermon series as Pastor of this church was on prayer. You have heard the phrase many times, "We need to pray our church to it's potential." If you can't make it to the prayer meeting that is regularly scheduled, please, make an appointment with God and get alone, like Jesus did, to lift up Voice of Hope or we simply will not grow. Per Jesus' example prayer must be a priority.

A ministry without prayer is like a flashlight without batteries. No light, no power. No power, no light. Jesus knew that. So He made time to be alone with God. Few things that enrich and empower life ever just "happen" by chance. Those times are made. Jesus never just "happened" to find Himself alone. He went out and sought a place. For Christ it wasn't a matter of taking time out for prayer so much as a time IN, re-creation of life, a time for a fresh adjustment to the will of the Father, for replenishment with the life and power of God. That's what prayer should be for you and me. It is not supposed to be just something we do before we eat, or what we do only when we find ourselves in dire circumstances. Prayer, time alone with God should be a way of life. No ... prayer will not do our work for us; what it will do is strengthen us for the work to be done. Prayer must be a priority. It is absolutely necessary to accomplish anything for the Kingdom of God. **[Note 4]**

Look at verse 30 and 31. Read (30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So He went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.) If you look at Scripture and the times when Jesus heals people, often He heals them so they can serve. In verse 31 it tells us that Jesus helped her up and she "IMMEDIATELY began to wait on them." Now Jesus didn't need her to wait on Him. But out of gratitude she wanted to

Healing is only occasionally physical. God can heal a person's soul, their spirit, their emotions, their attitude, etc. through a loving touch, a kind word, or just being there for someone (a loving presence).

At one of the lowest points in my life God used guys in my dorm floor like Chris, Neal, and Scott to make me feel worth something by asking me to be part of their group. Chris saw my pain and spent many hours with me playing table tennis and listening to me. And I remember my Bible Study leader named Gary, who regularly prayed with me. Then there was Pastor Bob Murphy, who was preaching peace into my life every Sunday. God used these people to take me by the hand, to lift me up, and restore me to service.

You could do that. You have done that. You may not be a professional counselor, but just by being there for someone is often enough. You may be uneasy around sick people or hospitals. You may have no training, but if you do **what you CAN do**, it will be enough. You have only a small part, but it is important to do that part ... your part. There may be no one else who can do your part. It may have taken ten people to help me get past that low time in my life, but number ten was no more important than number three. You may not be the person who sees the one in need restored. It is the same in evangelism. For the sake of argument let's just arbitrarily say that it takes 10 people to witness to a person before they accept Christ into their life as their personal Savior and Lord. The last person gets the thrill of hearing the earnest prayer, but each of the ten is equally important. This was brought home to me in an especially pointed way in college. One of my roommates was Kevin. Kevin grew up in a Catholic church but I knew that he did not have a personal relationship with Jesus. I shared the gospel with him several times while we were roommates. I can remember it like it was yesterday. I had just finished leading worship at a Campus Crusade For Christ meeting and I was putting my guitar away when this girl I barely knew tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around and she told me she had a message for me. My friend Kerri wanted you do know that Kevin accepted Jesus Christ into his heart as Lord and Savior last night. At that moment it didn't matter that I was number 2, 5, or 7, Kevin had become a follower of Jesus Christ. It was then that I truly knew what it meant to rejoice over one sinner that turns their life over to Jesus. So whether we are talking about witnessing or healing, every little bit counts. So please do what you CAN do, your part is important, it counts!

I don't know if you have noticed or not but every time that I spoke of healing so far I used a certain formula or pattern. Jesus used this pattern. He entered someone's life, took their hand, and lifted them up so they could go and serve. This resembles the major moves of Jesus' ministry. He comes, He takes our hand, and He lifts us up to go and to serve. When he enters our life it is as though we were a computer and Jesus hit the "enter" key. He is in our life. When Jesus touches us it is as if we hit the delete or escape key on our sickness whether it is physical, spiritual, or emotional. As the fever left Peter's mother-in-law, so fevers of anxiety and fear, fevers of self-seeking, of

return the favor. In the same way we should “want to” out of gratitude for what Jesus has done for us, serve Him and others. It also is apparent in the formula or pattern that Jesus often follows: He enters a life, takes them by the hand, and lifts them up to go and serve. It is very obvious that Jesus calls us to love our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love others as ourselves. Jesus called these the “Greatest commandments.” How can you truly love others without wanting to get up, go, and serve them. How will people know that you are Christ’s disciples? Jesus tells us in the gospels that they will know if we obey His commands and love one another as Christ loved us. **[Note 5]**

The last thing that I think we need to take away from our text today is that Jesus moved on. It would have been very natural for Christ to stay where He was popular, where He was comfortable, where He knew He was accepted. It would have been easy to stay. But Jesus pushed Himself and His disciples out of their comfort zone and he moved on. He knew it was God’s will. In the same way we need to keep growing and keep challenging ourselves to move beyond our comfort zone. That is why we take time to review our vision, mission, and core values every year. We need goals to strive for, goals to work toward, to get excited about. We need to be challenged to do things for God, for this community, and for our church that glorify god. Christians who have allowed their faith to stagnate, those who have stopped growing are miserable creatures. They are the inventors of paralysis by analysis and the creators of strangulation by regulation. Christ, by His words and by His actions, brought people into contact with the power of God to save and to heal. You and I CAN do the same thing. We can pray, we can heal, we can serve, and we can bring the good news of Jesus Christ to others. We can keep moving ahead, growing closer to God and our personal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ every day! Right here I want to be clear that growth in Christ very rarely happens on its own by chance. As I pointed out earlier, Jesus made it a specific point to get away and be alone with His Father. Please write down three goals during this next week. Come up with a personal growth plan! If you aim for nothing you will hit it every time! How will you grow closer to Jesus in the next week, month, year? Come up with a plan and put it in writing. If you leave it to chance, if you leave opportunities for prayer up to chance, you will find yourself stagnating or, at best, plateaued in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Come up with a plan to move forward. You are ... saved to serve. Let’s pray ... AMEN

Sermon Notes for “Saved to Serve” based on Mark 1:29-39
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- I. Jesus heals. **In Christ** we can do ALL things. Do what you CAN Do! Jesus' example follows the pattern: He enters one's life, takes them by the hand, and lifts them up to go and serve others.
- II. Jesus preaches. Remembering the compassion of Christ comforts us in our difficult times and serves as our commission as disciples.
- III. Jesus heals, Jesus preaches, Jesus prays. His time alone with God wasn't just happenstance. We need to plan it. Make an appointment with God. Ministry without prayer is like a flashlight with no battery!
- IV. We are saved to serve. Immediately Simon's mother-in-law began to wait on them.
- V. Jesus moved on. We must move forward, grow, and challenge our comfort zone. Christians who have stopped growing are the inventors of “paralysis by analysis” and “strangulation by regulation.” What is your personal growth plan? What are you going to do about it?