

Please join me in prayer.

Hide me in your glory, gracious and loving God. And may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my redeemer, and my refuge. Amen.

Good morning! Have you ever binge watched a show? In 2017, I was introduced to Netflix, and I found myself watching shows episode after episode. On many occasions, I would stay up to 3-4 in the morning. But I eventually grew tired of it, so I stopped. The gospel of Mark is like a series. The storytelling is continuous, and if it will be a tv show, I think it will be binge-worthy. But unlike the other gospels, Mark's version is more like a movie-trailer type, fast-paced and short. Short enough to catch your interest to want to see it if it were a movie. The author of the gospel of Mark has written the script intricately to catch our attention.

More than the cinematic genius of the gospel of Mark, there are also other interesting points in today's passage, and I am inviting you to dig into these interesting points. The first interesting point that I saw in this passage is the motion of Jesus' ministry. Verses 29-31 talks about how the ministry moved from being in the synagogue which talks about the preaching ministry to healing of Simon's mother-in-law to the house of Simon and Andrew. She was unnamed as how we would expect from a patristic/patriarchal society. A society which sees women in a lower status than men. But there are compelling pieces of this narrative. The first compelling piece that caught my attention is how Jesus healed her. Jesus touched her to heal her. If we are to delve into this act, this shows completeness in a different level. If we are to remember the creation story, God commanded the whole of creation except for mankind as written in Genesis 2:7. And we all know that the creation of mankind was the completion of God's 'task'. In a way, Jesus completed a task to heal a sick woman by touching her. Asians believe that there is a healing component when a person's skin touches another. It has something to do with the energy of one person being transferred to another when they touch. This is why therapies like acupuncture and reiki are prevalent among Asian cultures. Several articles in the internet said that many NICUs apply gentle touches to premature infants and this had helped the babies tremendously. Child psychologists also connect the importance of parents' appropriate touches to the development of the children. It is unfortunate though that CoVid changed all of these, and we had to be creative in employing 'healing touches' to others.

The second point that I have learned in this passage is how the ministry of Jesus and the disciples moved from the synagogue to the house. In ancient Jewish tradition, the synagogue and the house are the backbone of what makes a community. I find this motion very dynamic, that from the synagogue where the preaching occurred, Jesus went to a person's house in order to perform healing that inspired Simon's mother-in-law to serve the people. Isn't this a model of ministry and discipleship? What does this account mean to you? Can this be a meaningful story, or just a story that we will read/listen, marvel, and then forget? Another interesting chunk that I saw in this part of the passage is the fact that Simon's mother-in-law was motivated to serve others after experiencing healing. Her healing did not stop when the fever left her. When she felt better, she saw the need to serve Jesus and the others. She found her wholeness in the healing that she

received in Jesus, and she took it upon herself to be the hands and the feet of God and Jesus. How about us, where does our healing take us? Which kind of service are we being called?

I mentioned earlier that this passage was written in a time when women had a lower status compared to men. Whether we will accept this as a reality or not, I think there is a great value why the author of Mark's gospel saw the need to amplify the fact that Jesus healed her by means of touching her. If we are to remember last week's passage, Jesus cured the man with an unclean spirit by means of words. Verse 25 mentioned that Jesus rebuked the man to command the unclean spirit to leave the person. Jesus cured the man with words and cured the woman with a touch. I don't know about you, but I see this as Jesus showing preference to those who are marginalized. A teaching of Jesus that we know has been mentioned in many places in the gospels. Instead of just uttering words of healing for Simon's mother-in-law, Jesus took her hand, lifted her to heal her. This happened at the time in history when women considered marginalized.

The third point of this passage that draws me to reflection is the scene of Jesus praying at a deserted place. There was an instance back in the Philippines – maybe in 2008, the United Methodist Church in the Philippines was in a very difficult situation. I will not go into the details of that situation...maybe in the future. So this is my point...I was having a conversation with a friend – who happened to be a pastor, I was not even considering seminary at that time. In our conversation, he said, now is the time to pray for guidance. I felt frustration and was speechless. But I gathered my strength and told him, or more like reprimanded him, 'Are you telling me that this is the only time to pray?' And went on – 'So we only need to pray when we are in distress? Isn't prayer supposed to be part of a Christian's life?' Those were my statements to him. I am not here to judge your prayer life. In the Wesleyan tradition, that is part of your personal holiness. Prayer and praying should be part of your spiritual sustenance. This is the case with Jesus, too. In different places in the life of Jesus, we will see how prayer has been part of his lifestyle. In fact, I personally feel that it is his time to recharge because he has a practice of praying by himself. This is also a time for him to be vulnerable with God, and even cried out his fears to God. But it is also important to note that more than praying, the ministry of Jesus moved from different places, preaching about love and healing those who are sick. Not to mention how Jesus became the voice of the voiceless, and the strength for those who are weak because they are in the margins.

As followers of Jesus, we are being called to follow him – his teaching and life. As humans, we all experienced the healing that Jesus offered to the world. We are called to embody the life of Jesus – to be the voice and the voiceless, and the strength of the weak. Hopefully, as we receive our healing, it will also give us the strength, courage and fortitude to go forth to the world and share our healing to the world. May it be so. Amen.