

On Being Restored to Yourself

Mark 1:29-39 (February 7, 2021)

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29As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. 31He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

32That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. 35In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. 36And Simon and his companions hunted for him. 37When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." 38He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." 39And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Historical Context

Jesus' program of healing and exorcism cannot be understood apart from the context that necessitated it. Roman rule was emotionally as well as practically destructive to people in Judea. Despite Rome's earlier tolerance of Jewish religious life in the years before the Jewish Wars, subjection to Roman rule began to make it clear that authentic Jewish religious life was impossible under Roman occupation.

Theme: On Being Restored to Yourself

What am I doing here? Maybe this was the question Simon's mother-in-law asked when she first realized she was healed. The healing of Simon's mother-in-law is a *classic* healing story. It's all fine and good. It's what Jesus does. It's what he's good at. But there is something sort of disturbing about this story that doesn't seem to have anything to do with healing. "Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them."

What? She's healed so that she can serve? Whom? Did she want to? That's all she could do? Didn't she have any other aspirations? If you are brought back from the edge, from almost death, or from the brink of what you thought your life had to be, shouldn't there be something else for you, some sort of new vocation, new career, new identity?

But, what if the healing of Simon's mother-in-law was bringing her back to be the mother she always was and that she always wanted to be? And in being brought back to *who* she was, she became a disciple, called to minister, to serve, like the angels did for Jesus in the wilderness and like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served but to serve?

Have you ever felt like God has brought you back from the brink ... to yourself? That you were called back from a place that was not fully you, to be you?

The story of Simon's mother-in-law tells us that God does not call us to be something we are not but is in the business of restoring us to who we really are.