

Our passage today takes place in Capernaum. Sometime shortly before Jesus had called the disciples to leave their nets and follow Him. Since the Sabbath forbade people to walk long distances, I think He probably spent the night in Peter's mother-in-law's home, but Peter's mother-in-law was feeling fine. He went to the synagogue as a guest speaker and meanwhile she came down with a fever.

Jesus preached such a powerful message that the people were astonished. Then a demon in a man cried out that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus cast the demon out of the man to the further astonishment of the congregation. They went out and spread the word that someone special was in Capernaum. But remember it is the Sabbath, so the word has not yet spread outside that town.<sup>i</sup>

*<sup>29</sup> And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. <sup>31</sup> And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.* Mark 1:29-31 Jesus and the four fishermen returned to Simon's house. Archeologists have found the location of the synagogue and the ruins of Peter's house. It is only about a block away. (Picture) An early pilgrim wrote of an octagonal church built over Peter's home, which helped archeologists locate it. You can see it in the upper left of the photo.

First Jesus preached, then dealt with the demon, and now healed her of her fever. It makes me wonder about the cause of the fever. When the disciples told Jesus about her condition, Jesus went to where she was lying and took her by the hand and pulled her up. The fever was instantly gone, and she suddenly had the strength to get up and prepare something for them to eat.

Mark is beginning his Gospel by pointing out that Jesus did not conform to cultural expectations. Healing except in the case of life and death was forbidden on the Sabbath. For a man to touch a woman outside of his family was taboo. The idea of the Sabbath at that time was to rest in expectation of a coming day when Messiah would bring rest to the whole nation (Exodus 34:21<sup>ii</sup>; Hebrews 4:9<sup>iii</sup>). Witherington explains, *Jesus' beginning his healing work on the Sabbath should be seen as a deliberate attempt to bring in that final Sabbath rest, a time when creation would be relieved not just of the toil and turmoil of a fallen world but of disease, decay, and death as well. From this perspective, there was no better time to heal a person than on the Sabbath as an indicator that the ultimate Sabbath was coming.*<sup>iv</sup>

**In 2:28 Jesus declared He is Lord even of the Sabbath.** While Jesus gave many illustrations of why their interpretation of the Sabbath was excessive and examples of how they also worked, such as saving an animal (Luke 14:5<sup>v</sup>) or the priests in the temple (Matthew 12:5<sup>vi</sup>) or circumcision on the eighth day (John 7:22<sup>vii</sup>), what Jesus was really implying is that the Messianic kingdom had come. He is our Sabbath rest because He fulfils the Law and credits us with His righteousness. He said, *"Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and you will find rest for your souls."* Matthew 11:28 It is an invitation to rest from the works of the Law that Jews referred to as a heavy yoke (Acts 15:10<sup>viii</sup>). I think some of the Pharisees knew what He was implying. Consider John 5:18 *<sup>18</sup> This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal*

*with God.* Breaking the Sabbath and calling God His own Father were both making himself equal with God. That is because the Jews of that day knew that God worked on the Sabbath by keeping the stars in space, providing rain, growing the crops, and everything else that sustains life. But they reasoned that God was so great that it really was not work to Him. When Jesus said He is Lord even of the Sabbath, He was saying that greatness that does such things without any effort also applies to Him!

I have had many conversations with those who adhere to the Old Testament law of the Sabbath. If that is what you think honors God, by all means you should do it. But do not miss the fact that we are no longer under the Law but have entered the rest of the kingdom of God. Jesus is our Sabbath rest. The author of Hebrews elaborates on this. He writes, <sup>8</sup> *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.* <sup>9</sup> *So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,* <sup>10</sup> *for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.* Hebrews 4:8-10 If you are born-again and live in the grace merited for you by the work of Jesus on the cross, you live in the rest of God, the Sabbath rest, the rest for your soul that Jesus promised to all who come to Him. If you keep whining about how you are not good enough and do not know if you will make it to heaven, you need to enter the rest He offers you. It is His life in you that will transform you, not your efforts alone. His work on the cross means you can rest in what He accomplished for you.

Jesus took the hand of Peter's mother-in-law and raised her up. Have you ever wondered about what it would be like for Jesus to touch you or for you to touch Jesus? In the Torah we are told that the altar sanctifies the gift because it is most holy. When the tabernacle was built and the altar was dedicated to God, God told Moses, <sup>37</sup> *Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy.* Exodus 29:37 It was dedicated to God and to be used only for Him as He directed in the Laws of Moses. If someone brought a gift that was impure for some reason, the holiness of the altar sanctified the gift.

Now think of how holy Jesus is, God above all gods, Lord of lords, Creator of heaven and earth, sinless, perfect, and pure. When people with leprosy came near others, they were to cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" What happened when Jesus touched the untouchable? Whatever touches the Most Holy becomes holy! Look further in this chapter to verses 41 and 42<sup>ix</sup>. We can use Mark's favorite word, "Immediately!" BOOM Pure as the driven snow. Like a bolt of lightning!

But now consider the woman with the issue of blood who we will read about in chapter 5. She pushed her way through the crowd, a violation of the law, and touched that bundle of threads that hung from Jesus' shirt, the tzitzit (Greek *kraspedon*).<sup>x</sup> Why? Because they believed the tzitzit of the Messiah would heal people. The moment she touched it -BOOM- she was whole, the result of touching holiness. (picture from Magdela) But the disciples said lots of people were bumping into Him. What is the difference? Jesus said power had flowed from Him (5:30,31<sup>xi</sup>). Apparently mere contact was not enough or the soldier that slapped Jesus would have become holy (John 18:22<sup>xii</sup>). The contact has to be mixed with faith either that of Jesus or the faith of the person touching Him. **Faith is the conduit for the power of holiness to flow and transform people.** Jesus had faith that if He pulled her up that she would not only be healed but empowered to serve. His holiness would make her holy and whole. In Mark 6:56<sup>xiii</sup> people sought to touch the tzitzit of Jesus and everyone who did so was instantly healed.

Remember that sanctified vessels are for the service of God (Romans 6:13<sup>xiv</sup>). To be made holy is to be made a usable servant of God.

I have been thinking of the hymn He Touched Me. *He touched me, oh he touched me. And oh the joy that floods my soul. Something happened and now I know, He touched me and made me whole.* Simon Peter's mother-in-law may have sung something like that. Do you remember when He touched you or when you reached out in faith and touched Him? If you have never done so, know that He invites you to come to Him. He is willing if you recognize who He is and desire to be cleansed of your past and made new to be dedicated to His service. The psalmist wrote, <sup>5</sup> *You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.* <sup>6</sup> *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.* Psalm 139:5-6 When I read that, it made me think that the psalmist was touched by the Lord, and it was just too much to put into words.

Like the blind beggar on the road to Jericho, we can cry out to Jesus, *"Son of David, have mercy on me!"* Matthew 20:30 Ask in faith for His touch that makes you whole and dedicates you to His service.

We also see that once healed, Peter's mother-in-law served Jesus. Now that may mean that she honored him as a disciple honors his or her rabbi, or it may mean she served food which could be breaking the oral traditions depending on if there was any preparation and how heavy the food was. If that was the case then she got the point that the Messiah had come and she had entered His rest, therefore she was free to serve Him any day of the week. We were all born with a sin nature (Psalm 51:5<sup>xv</sup>; Romans 5:12<sup>xvi</sup>). We are all in need of Jesus' touch, going to Him to find the rest for our souls, for then we can truly serve Him.

<sup>32</sup> *That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.* <sup>33</sup> *And the whole city was gathered together at the door.* <sup>34</sup> *And he healed 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.* Mark 1:32-34 Some commentators call this the long day. Jesus preached, cast out a demon, healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law, and even though it is sundown, for Jesus the day is just getting going. All the people came to Jesus to be healed or have a demon cast out of a loved one. Why wait until sundown? The Sabbath was over and they could go and get loved ones in need of healing from the nearby towns, or carry those who were disabled. Apparently they did not understand the Lord of the Sabbath was present. They only saw Him as a healer and exorcist. The whole city was gathered at the door!

The physical healing of all who came to Him was illustrative of the fact that He can heal our sin sick souls, which gives us rest. There is not a sickness He cannot heal or a demon that is able to disobey His command. He ordered them not to speak because they knew Him. Before they followed Satan in his rebellion, they were in the heavenly realm and knew Jesus, the holy One of God (Revelation 12:4<sup>xvii</sup>). It was not yet time to make it known that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus healed everyone who came to Him (Luke 6:19<sup>xviii</sup>). Some Christians today believe that everyone they pray for should be healed. If they are not healed they say it was because the person did not have faith. But they forget that God uses affliction to draw us near to Him, to deepen our faith, and sometimes to keep us humble, such as the case with the Apostle Paul (Psalm 119:71<sup>xix</sup>; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9<sup>xx</sup>). I have elaborated on

that in previous sermons so I will not belabor the point. Suffice to say that if we pray according to God's will He hears us (1 John 5:14<sup>xxi</sup>).

<sup>35</sup> *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.* <sup>36</sup> *And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,* <sup>37</sup> *and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you."* Mark 1:35,36 How late was Jesus up that night healing and casting out demons? The power flowed from Him for each situation. Finally, the line ended, and Jesus shut the door and laid down amongst His four disciples. Early the next morning before dawn the disciples woke up and found Jesus was not there. They must have gone to the pier and checked the boat. Then looking all over town as the sun began to rise. People were getting up and asking where they could find Jesus. One of the disciples had the idea to go to the shoreline where He had called them to follow Him. It was about a twenty-minute walk from Capernaum.

There on the hillside in a shallow cave overlooking the lake they saw a figure that looked like Jesus. (Picture) Climbing up the steep embankment they found Him. They said, "Everyone is looking for you!" I get the sense that what they are saying is something like, "The town is waiting to hear from you after all were healed. What are you doing out here all by yourself?"

Martin Luther is quoted as saying, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours of the day in prayer." Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19<sup>xxii</sup>). This was the first revelation of His authority over the demonic realm and all sickness. Everyone is anxious to hear more from Him. But what is God's direction? **Success can be a distraction. God is looking for faithful servants, not successful ones.** God's idea of success and man's idea are often at odds. Later we find that Capernaum is one of the three towns Jesus cursed for having seen so much and yet not accepting Him as the Messiah (Luke 10:15<sup>xxiii</sup>).

<sup>38</sup> *And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."* Mark 1:38 The Father had directed His Son to move on to preach in other towns. That must have disappointed the brothers who were from that town. Think of how the town respected them now after having such a guest who healed all diseases. It would have only been natural for them to want Him to continue preaching there. But the One who sees all and knows all knew there was fruit to be harvested in other places that would be more open to receiving Jesus' message. Jesus said, *"...for that is why I came out."*

The phrase can mean either why He left the city, or why He came from heaven, or both. He came proclaiming what we read in verse 15. *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* Luke 16:16 helps us understand the message. <sup>16</sup> *"The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it."* The era of the Law and the prophets was concluding. Good news had come. Jesus was making a way to enter the kingdom of God. The Law and the prophets of the nation of Israel had proclaimed this One was coming, the seed of Eve who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15<sup>xxiv</sup>), the descendant of Abraham who would bless the world (Genesis 12:3<sup>xxv</sup>), the sprout from David who would reign forever, the Light to the nations prophesied by Isaiah was physically present (Isaiah 49:6<sup>xxvi</sup>). How can you keep it for one town? The world needs to know!



Yet, most of Jesus' ministry was around Galilee, as the prophet Isaiah predicted Isaiah 9:1<sup>xxvii</sup>. That is because Jesus was ministering around the highway called The Way of the Sea, and that is what Isaiah predicted seven centuries before. It was a highway for the world traveling north, south, east, and west. It was referred to as Galilee of the Gentiles because large Gentile cities of Sephoris, Hippos, Tiberius, and Bet Shean were located there. Jesus would make inroads to Gentile areas in Sidon, Hippos, and Kursi during the last year of His ministry.<sup>xxviii</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.* Mark 1:39 Archeologists have discovered the ruins of synagogues in Capernaum, Chorazin, and recently at Magdala. They know there are more to be uncovered. The one Jesus would have gone to as a child in Nazareth is probably under the present tourist site. The Sephoris synagogue ruin is also most likely under a later synagogue that has been excavated revealing an elaborate tile floor

What Jesus was proclaiming would have stirred excitement for the coming of the Messianic age. But what they thought of as rest was the conquering of the Romans. They did not realize a greater rest was to be entered by faith in what the Messiah would do for their souls.

What do we think of as rest? Is it a vacation or retirement? Does it compare with the rest Jesus offers? Jesus' power to heal and cast out demons verified the message of the kingdom being at hand (Isaiah 35:5,6<sup>xxix</sup>). However, the majority took the message of the kingdom as a military victory rather than a spiritual one. We have the same problem today with those who proclaim the prosperity gospel. There is abundant spiritual prosperity when we place our faith in Jesus. But the example of Jesus and the disciples is not one of wealth and comfort, but rather of taking up our cross and laying up our treasure in heaven (Matthew 10:38<sup>xxx</sup>; 6:19,20<sup>xxxi</sup>).

Dear friends, the kingdom is here. If you are under the reign of the King of kings, you are in the kingdom, adopted as a child of God, and an heir with Jesus (1 John 3:1<sup>xxxii</sup>; Galatians 4:7<sup>xxxiii</sup>). This same Jesus who healed all who came to Him is willing to touch you and make your spirit whole, your life holy, and direct you to a life of meaningful service with the added benefits with joy and peace. He is still preaching through His servants the message of the kingdom and inviting all to press into it by repenting of our shortcomings and asking Him to be the Lord of our lives.

This is not just a story. I have showed you where these things took place and the prophecies Jesus fulfilled. The men who shared this story were executed because they refused to deny it. It has been proven to be true in millions of lives that have been transformed from selfishness to a life of meaningful service. Just as Jesus took the hand of Peter's mother-in-law and raised her up to full health, He can lift you out of your spiritually impoverished condition and cleanse you from all your sins, indwell you with His Holy Spirit, and empower you to live for Him. Reach out and take His hand as we sing and let Him lift you up. Come to Him and find rest for your soul!

Questions:

- 1 What was the Sabbath concept in Jesus' day?
- 2 What did Jesus say His was His relationship to the Sabbath?
- 3 What is the believers' Sabbath rest?
- 4 What causes the power to flow from Jesus to us?

- 5 What is the purpose of sanctifying a vessel?
- 6 Can Jesus heal anyone? Does He heal everyone?
- 7 Describe the long day.
- 8 Where had Jesus gone the next morning and why?
- 9 Is your idea of rest different from the rest of God?
- 10 Will you take Jesus' hand and let Him raise you out of the sickness of sin?

<sup>i</sup> Oral tradition forbids walking more than 6/10ths of a mile outside the town where you are staying.

<sup>ii</sup> **Exodus 34:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

<sup>iii</sup> **Hebrews 4:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,

<sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

<sup>iv</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 100.

<sup>v</sup> **Luke 14:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"

<sup>vi</sup> **Matthew 12:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?

<sup>vii</sup> **John 7:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

<sup>viii</sup> **Acts 15:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

<sup>ix</sup> **Mark 1:41-42 (ESV)**

<sup>41</sup> Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."

<sup>42</sup> And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

<sup>x</sup> Jewish men were to wear an outer shirt in which the end of the 613 threads which represent the 613 laws of Moses hung from the bottom side of their shirt. It was tied in five knots to represent the five books of Torah.

<sup>xi</sup> **Mark 5:30-31 (KJV)**

<sup>30</sup> And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? <sup>31</sup> And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

<sup>xii</sup> **John 18:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?"

<sup>xiii</sup> **Mark 6:56 (ESV)**

<sup>56</sup> And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

<sup>xiv</sup> **Romans 6:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

<sup>xv</sup> **Psalms 51:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Romans 5:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

<sup>xvii</sup> **Revelation 12:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Luke 6:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

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<sup>xix</sup> **Psalm 119:71 (ESV)**

<sup>71</sup> It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

<sup>xx</sup> **2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

<sup>xxi</sup> **1 John 5:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

<sup>xxii</sup> **John 5:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Luke 10:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **Genesis 3:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

<sup>xxv</sup> **Genesis 12:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Isaiah 9:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The healing of the Sidonian's daughter, the deliverance of the man possessed by Legion, and the feeding of the four-thousand.

<sup>xxix</sup> **Isaiah 35:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; <sup>6</sup> then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

<sup>xxx</sup> **Matthew 10:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **Matthew 6:19-20 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **1 John 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **Galatians 4:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.