

²⁹ And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew,
with James and John.

³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever,
and immediately they told Him about her.

³¹ And He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up,
and the fever left her,
and she began to serve them.

³² ¶ That evening at sundown they brought to Him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.

³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door.

³⁴ 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.

And immediately he left the synagogue – With this connection to the previous section, we are to keep in mind that this is all taking place in Capernaum on the same Sabbath day when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue and cast out the unclean spirit

The house of Simon and Andrew – According to John (1:44), Simon and Andrew were originally from Bethsaida, but here Capernaum is where their home (for right now) is.

Now Simon’s mother-in-law – Were it not for this detail, we would not know about Simon’s family. But we know from this that he was married and likely would have had children unless there were fertility issues. It was expected culturally that marriage would produce offspring, though obviously that didn’t always happen. Because there aren’t any other specific details about Simon’s wife or any indication why she was not present with her mother at this time, some have also hypothesized that by the time Jesus called him as His disciple, Simon was a widower.

And immediately they told him about her – We’re sort of left to imagine some of the domestic details. No doubt Simon knew his mother-in-law was ill that day, and that was why she did not go to the synagogue for worship (which otherwise would be the expectation). Culturally, a meal at home following the synagogue service would have been a common practice. What’s unclear is whether they go to Simon and Andrew’s house at the brothers’ invitation or whether this was Jesus’ idea. It seems though that upon arriving at the house, Simon’s mother-in-law’s sickness could be an excuse either why Jesus might not want to enter in or to explain the lack of a meal at their home that day (because no one was able to prepare it).

Took her by the hand – Jesus willfully breaks all the “rules” about clean/unclean. He does not hesitate to touch and physically associate with people who are sick. Though Simon’s mother-in-law was not terribly sick, this is just the beginning. Jesus will go on to touch even lepers (1:41).

Lifted her up – The situation is pretty straightforward. Simon’s mother-in-law is lying down sick, Jesus comes into her room beside her bed, takes her hand and helps her up. The language is completely natural and appropriate, but it’s nearly impossible for me not to see the crossover in language. The verb “lifted up” is the same word that is used for “raising” the dead. There is obviously a connection between sickness and death, sickness being the symptom of the much greater ill, but there is also a great picture of hope here, in that Jesus “raises” Simon’s mother-in-law from her sickbed just as one day He will “raise” us all from our graves. Healing in Jesus’ ministry is seen as a foretaste of the final healing to come in the resurrection and the new creation. Mark’s introduction to the Gospel prepared us for this type of ministry, where things that people expect to only happen at the final day begin to happen now as Jesus, the Messiah, has come.

She began to serve them – Simon’s mother-in-law’s service is no doubt the normal hospitality that she would have wanted to offer to her family and guests, but couldn’t because of her sickness. Now she’s free to do that. Her service is a result of Jesus first serving her. She needed Jesus’ healing, and now having been healed, she serves not just Jesus, but all of them.

That evening at sundown – there are probably a few reasons why the story continues at the end of the day. First, this has given time for some of those stories about Jesus to circulate. People went home from the synagogue and told others about what Jesus had done. Perhaps by now too they learned that Jesus not only cast out demons, but He also healed those who were sick physically (but with no implication of any spiritual hostility). We also are aware of the sundowning effect among people who are ill, how by the end of the day their symptoms and illnesses become more severe and difficult to manage. Evening also marks the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the next day (Sunday in their calendar). On the Sabbath work was forbidden according to custom, so it would have been challenging for people who were very strict about those Sabbath rules to do the work required to bring their loved ones to Jesus. But now that it is evening, it is no longer Sabbath and those restrictions would no longer apply. Evening is generally more associated with evil, Satan, and death itself, but Jesus is the Light and scatters all darkness (John 1:5; 8:12).

Ezek. 34:12 ESV As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

The whole city – Obviously a bit of an exaggeration, but probably not by much. All people, as many who were near, would undoubtedly have flocked to Jesus so that they too might see who this is and marvel along with the people who told them about Him. There may not be real faith in Jesus, but there is definitely curiosity.

He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons –

Again Mark makes a distinction between healing people who were sick and casting out demons. Jesus did both things, but the one was not necessarily connected with the other. Mark makes no comment on the motive behind the people who sought out Jesus: Were they merely after a miracle-worker or did they see something more in Him?

He would not permit the demons to speak – This is an echo of the previous story about the man in the synagogue (1:25). There are no specific commands given to people who were healed not to speak, but the demons, on the other hand, were specifically forbidden from telling others about who Jesus was.