

When the Sunday School teacher asks her class which miracle of Jesus is their favorite, little Johnny is not going to blurt out: “The one where Jesus heals the fever of Simon’s mother-in-law!” That miracle would not even make their list.

But for Simon and his mother-in-law, it would rank at the very top. St. Luke tells us this is a high fever that she has. She may not be lying in her deathbed just yet, but when you have such a fever, it can feel like death in some ways. St. Mark reports in our text that Jesus grasps her hand. Not to place a couple of aspirin into it. To lift her up. And as He does, the fever leaves her.

And then we hear these amazing words: “*she began to serve them.*” This is not how it works with fevers. You and I know this. When a fever leaves us, the last thing we want to do is jump up and get to work. We’re drained, exhausted. And more, we should avoid being around people lest they become sick. But not Simon’s mother-in-law. When Jesus lifts her up out of her fever, she jumps into action as though she had never even been sick at all.

This little miracle of Jesus points us to the last miracle that He will do. On the Last Day when Jesus will lift us up out of our deathbed, our grave, and just like Simon’s mother-in-law, we will jump into action and render to Him our thanks and praise for all eternity.

But we do not have to wait until that day to thank and praise our Lord. Every day this same miracle Jesus does for us. He lifts us up out of one evil after another.

How many times in your life has Jesus lifted you out of an illness? Out of depression? Out of danger? We have lost track, haven’t we? Rather, we do remember all those times when He did not lift us out of such things. Or at least not in a timely fashion.

And we think not only of ourselves here, but also of our loved ones. Simon, in our text, does not have a fever. His mother-in-law does. He tells Jesus about her “*immediately,*” it says. And without hesitation, Jesus goes to her and lifts her up.

You do the same for those you love. You tell Jesus about them. You ask Him to lift your loved one out of their sickness, out of their addiction, out of whatever evil has them in its grasp. Sometimes Jesus acts immediately. Sometimes He waits to act. And sometimes it seems as if He has no interest in lifting up the one we love.

Dr. Harold Ristau, who was my colleague in Kenya, tells of a young woman who was possessed by a demon back when he was a young pastor in an inner city. He went to her, to be used by Jesus, to lift her up out of her evil possession. Not once, or twice. Many, many times. Because every time she was lifted up, she would fall back into demon possession because of her destructive sinful habits. It seemed to Pastor Ristau that God was not going to win in the end with her. But he never gave up. He went to her home too many times to count to lift her up out of her evil possession. And thanks be to God, in time this woman died not within the devil’s grasp, but within Jesus’ strong arms.

Friend, whatever it is that has you, or your loved one, in its grasp, do not despair, and do not give up. Be like Simon and tell Jesus about your loved one again, and again, and again. And place your hope in Jesus. His grasp, through the water of Holy Baptism, is a grasp that no disease, no addiction, no demon can sever.

And I will also add: no sin. Because of the weakness of our flesh, and that of our loved ones, we fall back into sin's grasp again, and again, and again. This would be the end of us except for the truth that Jesus allowed Himself to be grasped by the thorns and nails of our sin on the cross. And He did not go to that cross a healthy man. He went, bearing in His body, the fever of Simon's mother-in-law, the leprosy of those He healed, the death of those He raised to life.

Jesus went to the cross carrying your sin and mine. And Isaiah tells us that He also carried our grief and our sorrows. All the evils that are able to grasp us, grasped Jesus. Our addictions and our diseases, our depression, and everything that we struggle with. He took it all for us. He carried it. He bore it. He endured it.

And so, He knows what you are going through right now. And more, He is able to help when you cry to Him. And He does help.

In your baptism, Jesus lifted you up out of Satan's possession. Out of death. And He placed you with Himself. And nothing you do, no evil you suffer, no sin you commit, no living death with which you struggle, or with which your loved ones struggle, can ever tear you away from Him.

Look at His hands. Those are nail marks there. And as those marks will never leave His hands, so with you. His hands will never let go of you or your loved one. Not because we grasp Him so tightly. We don't. But because He grasps us with a love beyond our understanding. He forgives us from a heart that is filled with compassion.

What evil is grasping you? Grasping your loved one? Be like Simon and bring it to Jesus. Its grasp is not as strong as Jesus' grasp. It doesn't matter what sin it is. It is forgiven. You are forgiven. All of you Jesus forgives. And each one of you Jesus grasps. And in His love and compassion, He lifts you up out of every evil in your life.

The last evil is death. But not even death can grasp you forever. Jesus will come to your bed into which you will be lowered one day, and with a shout of triumph, He will lift you out of death forever. And your joy will be so complete as you gather around Jesus with those you love, that you will not even remember all the sin, and sickness, and evils that once had you in their grasp. They will be gone forever. This is the hope you have in Jesus. And it cannot be taken from you.

Today as you come up to the altar for Holy Communion, be like Simon. No need to speak out loud as he did with Jesus. Simply with your mind, or in a whisper, give Jesus the name of your loved one who, right now, is being grasped by something evil. Whenever you come up to the altar you can do this for your loved one. Give them to Jesus. Place them into His grasp. Amen.