

## Mark 1:29-31

February 7, 2021

If it wasn't for the fact that she was sick, we would not even know that Simon Peter had a mother-in-law. Her fever is what puts her in the Bible. That, along with Jesus healing her of it. This was a miracle. Yet it surely would not rank up there in the top ten of anyone's list. Curing a fever is nowhere close to raising a dead person to life. Even miracles such as healing the blind, and the deaf, lepers, and those possessed by demons, are much more impressive to us than healing the fever of Simon's mother-in-law.

But she was not blind, or deaf. She did not have leprosy. No demon was in possession of her. She had a fever. And so, for her, when Jesus healed her, this miracle ranked up there at the very top of her list.

At every Miss America pageant, the last of the contestants are asked a question such as, "What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations?" And always we hear such noble answers as, "I want to end starvation for all people." "I want to work toward world peace." Why not just be honest and say, "I want the blister on my toe to go away." "I want to sleep better at night." "I want the constant bickering between my mom and dad to stop." But such responses would not impress the judges.

Would they make an impression upon God? Well, what do you pray for...an end to starvation, world peace, or for your headache to go away? Jesus fed more than five thousand people at one time. But He did not do a miracle to end starvation forever. He is called the Prince of peace. But He performed no miracle to end all conflicts and wars. He did raise a dead person here and there. He did cast out demons. And He did lift Simon's mother-in-law out of her fever.

We know that God loves the whole world. Yet this little miracle tells us that this woman, as insignificant as she was on the grand scale of things, was loved dearly by Jesus, and her fever, and the illness causing it, was important enough for Him to go to her bedside and heal her.

Are you that important to Jesus? Are those things in your life which are troubling you right now, be they large or small, important enough for Jesus to lift you out of them as He did for Simon's mother-in-law?

Well, think about this. God did not baptize the entire world's population. But He did baptize you. Right then and there, Jesus lifted you up out of your sins, out of death, out of the kingdom of the devil. And that miracle, yes it truly was a miracle, though not even on the list of miracles which impress the world, was the greatest miracle in your life. And if Jesus did that for you, which He did, then does that not tell you there is nothing in your life which is unimportant to Him?

So, why doesn't He get rid of COVID for me? Why do I still have back pain? Why this? Why that?

If you ever had a really nasty sack of trash in the house, even after you got rid of the sack, much of the odor from it stayed behind. In your baptism, Jesus lifted you out of the most vile and horrific thing of all – your sin, death itself, and the power of the devil. Jesus took this sack of trash away from you. And yet the odor, much of it, stays with you.

I'm not saying you smell bad. I'm saying that the problems sin cause stay with us even though our sin is forgiven. Our bodies will die even though we are given eternal life in Jesus Christ. The devil will still hound us even though Jesus defeated him for us.

You will have troubles in life. You will have a fever now and then. You will deal with pain in various places in your body. When these come, do not think that you and your trouble are unimportant to Jesus. Think instead: I am baptized into Christ. I am forgiven, therefore. I am loved by my Lord. I am important to Him. He is not punishing me with my troubles. He knows what is best for me. If He allows me to suffer with my trouble, He will sustain me through it. If He takes my trouble away, well and good, but that is for Him to decide, not me.

Remember that Jesus was lifted up, not out of His troubles, but into yours. He was lifted up on a cross to bear your sin. He bore your infirmities, says Isaiah, your sicknesses, even COVID for you, so that these are not punishments upon you, but trials through which God refines you like gold is refined by fire.

The fever refined Simon's mother-in-law. For after she was cured, she lived in service to God and her neighbor. "*She began to serve them,*" it says. Jesus did not heal her so she could go out and end starvation for all people or bring about world peace. He lifted her out of her fever so she could return to her God-given vocation of serving right there in her home.

Fevers can prevent God's people from carrying out their vocations. So can sin. When Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed, others in the house had to carry out her duties, and it surely was a hardship for them. That's happening right now. The responsibilities of the many are being done by the few right here in our congregation. And yet they are doing it willingly.

I remind all of us, whether we are freely moving about or lying in bed with a fever, that as Christians we have a vocation given us from God. He has placed us into our families to serve there. But did He not also place us into our church family to serve here?

If a fever is preventing us from serving, that is understandable. Although Jesus can lift us out of our fever as He did in our text. He also lifts you and me out of our sins. He forgives you, my friend. Not a few of you. All of you are forgiven of your sins. And so you will be like Simon's mother-in-law. Being lifted up by Jesus, you will live in service to God and your neighbor. Amen.