

Saved to Serve

Mark 1:30-31

Sermon

Hobart, November 22nd, 2015

Devonport, November 28th, 2015

Launceston, November 29th, 2015

Mark 1:30-31 NLT

³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. They told Jesus about her right away. ³¹ So he went to her bedside, took her by the hand, and helped her sit up. Then the fever left her, and she prepared a meal for them. ¹

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mk 1:29–31). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Philippians 2:1-11 NLT

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges*;
he took the humble position of a slave*
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

INTRODUCTION:

Mark 1:30-31

³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. They told Jesus about her right away. ³¹ So he went to her bedside, took her by the hand, and helped her sit up. Then the fever left her, and she prepared a meal for them.

1. This moving but brief and touching story, like all of what we read in the Gospels, has a powerful, encouraging and instructive message for all of us disciples of Jesus Christ, in fact for all people
2. It reveals who God is, and the motive and intent he has for us.
3. Jesus, God with us, acted to deliver, to heal, to rescue and restore.
 - a) Because that is his nature and his never changing desire and will
4. But there is also something else in this particular passage
 - a) A seemingly incidental and easily missed or dismissed, simple and quiet action that teaches us a lot about the life of God
 - b) The life he lives, and the life we are saved to live
5. Today we are going to be exploring that, with particular focus on the subject of Christian service
 - a) Why we are to serve, and how

B. PRAYER

BODY:

II. SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW IN MARK 1:30-31

³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. They told Jesus about her right away. ³¹ So he went to her bedside, took her by the hand, and helped her sit up. Then the fever left her, and she prepared a meal for them.

A. THERE IS A CLEAR CONCERN BY FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

1. In a sense this is what we do when we pray for those in need around us, including as in this case, those who are sick
 - a) We talk to God about it and ask for him to help them through Jesus and the Holy Spirit
2. God isn't limited to intervening for just those we pray for, but on the other hand, would Jesus have come and healed the woman if he wasn't asked by those who loved her?

B. SO JESUS COMES AND HEALS HER OF HER FEVER

1. But what happens then, that we tend to read right over?
 - a) v. 31c "she prepared a meal for them".

C. WHAT DOES THE RESPONSE OF SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW TEACH US?

1. It is an illustration of how simple, down to earth, even seemingly mundane serving, is a vital part of our new life in Christ
2. Simon's mother-in-law responded to her healing by serving Jesus, and not only Jesus but the others that were there as well, her friends and family that had cared enough to call on Jesus to come and heal her
3. What Jesus has done here typifies his incarnate ministry to all mankind

4. He hears prayers for his people, the prayers of his people
5. He responds to our needs
6. He stepped into our world, our everyday lives
 - a) He came to her bedside
 - b) He held her hand
 - c) He helped her sit up
 - d) Then she was healed
7. In her healed and renewed state, she got up and served
 - a) This was a simple response of gratitude to the merciful and saving ministry of Jesus Christ, and also to the love of others.

D. THE LESSON IS BASIC AND CLEAR

1. Servant ministry, caring for others, responding to their needs, being with them, giving them comfort, support and assistance is the way of God
2. It is what God in the flesh, Jesus Christ did all throughout his life, culminating in his ultimate act of service and self-sacrifice, his death
3. Servant ministry is an essential part of the new life we have in Christ

E. MINISTRY AS AN OBEDIENT RESPONSE TO GOD AND HIS LOVE AND MERCY

1. Ministry and loving care and serving is not an optional extra for us as Christians.
2. We have died with Christ and have been resurrected and adopted into the life of God.
 - a) We are his children.
3. We have been transferred from the kingdom of this world, into the kingdom of God.
 - a) We are no longer our own, we belong to Christ.

4. We are no longer living apart from God, doing our own thing to our detriment and that of those around us.
 - a) Rather, we are learning to be faithful to him who is perfectly faithful and gracious towards us.
 - b) His ways are becoming our ways.
 - c) We live by every word of God. His wish is our command.
5. In this new life, therefore we look to Jesus as the captain of our salvation to lead and guide us in the holy, godly life through the Spirit.

F. JESUS MADE CLEAR THAT THE GREATEST AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS WOULD BE SERVANTS.

1. The Greek word for servant is *diakonia*.
2. In Mark 1:31 the Greek for “prepared a meal for them” is *diakoneín*, to serve a meal, or to serve at table
 - a) Kittel tells us that this Greek word family, including the verb *diakonéō*, and the noun *diakonía* has the basic concrete sense of, “to wait at table”, “to care for” and more comprehensively “to serve”.²
3. The Greeks saw such activity as menial and degrading.
 - a) This brings to mind Peter’s reaction to Jesus insistence on washing the disciples’ feet (John 13:4-10).
4. The Jews had a more positive view of service and ministry.
 - a) Josephus used the Greek *diakoneín* for “to wait at table,” “to obey,” and even “to render priestly service”.³
 - b) We are in a way functioning as God’s holy priesthood, representing God to those around us, and serving them on his behalf
 - (1) And we are giving our lives to God as willing offerings in the process
 - c) Kittel explains that in Judaism,

² Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 152). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

³ Kittel.

The commandment to love one's neighbor offers a solid basis for sacrificial service, but in later Judaism tends to be weakened by the distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous and the construing of service as meritorious rather than sacrificial.⁴

5. But as Kittel tells us, Jesus brought a pure and transformed view of servant ministry,

By exalting service and relating it to love of God, Jesus both sets forth a completely different view from that of the Greeks and purifies the Jewish concept.⁵

6. When you think about it, service is one of the most common and powerful concepts and actions that Jesus lived and taught.

a) It is no surprise then that this word family, including *diakoneín*, *diakonéō* and *diakonía*, is widely used in the N.T.

G. JESUS MADE CLEAR THAT AS HE SERVED US, WE ARE TO SERVE HIM FULLY AND OBEDIENTLY

1. But not just because we have to, but because it is his way of life.

2. We serve because we want to be like him and participate in the way he lives.

Luke 17:7-10

⁷ "When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, 'Come in and eat with me'? ⁸ No, he says, 'Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.' ⁹ And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. ¹⁰ In the same way, when you obey me you should say, 'We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.' " ⁶

⁴ Kittel.

⁵ Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 153). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 17:6–10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

3. This is the normal expectation with servant/master relationships
 - a) As our master, we owe Jesus our full allegiance and service.
4. But Jesus is not like other masters or bosses or rulers
 - a) He himself is a servant, our servant, the servant King
5. Thomas Torrance made clear how that ministry (*diakonia*) is based in Jesus Christ's *diakonia*.

Christ was himself the **diakonos par excellence** whose office it was not only to prompt the people of God in their response to the divine mercy and to be merciful themselves, not only to stand out as the perfect model or example of compassionate service to the needy and distressed, but to provide in himself and in his own deeds of mercy the creative ground and source of all such **diakonia**.⁷

III. PHILIPPIANS 2:

A. JESUS GAVE UP HIS POSITION AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND AND BECAME ONE OF US, ONE WITH US

Philippians 2:1-18 NLT

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷ T.F. Torrance, *Gospel, Church and Ministry*, ed. Jock Stein, Pickwick, 2012, p.141

7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges*;
he took the humble position of a slave*
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

1. Jesus is the greatest servant of all

a) He has served us in the ultimate way, by becoming human, and dying our death, "a criminal's death on a cross"

2. But he has also resurrected us to glory

3. Jesus has restored and redeemed us to be his fellow servants, his brothers and sisters, sharing in his ongoing ministry and service to all mankind, to all of his creation

4. We love him because he first loved us, we also serve him because he first served us.

a) Paul then admonished and encourages the Philippians to follow the example of Jesus, to respond to his service to us by humbly and willingly serving him and each other.

Philippians 2:12-18

12 Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. 13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

14 Do everything without complaining and arguing, 15 so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world

full of crooked and perverse people. 16 Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. 17 But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. 18 Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

B. FAITHFUL SERVICE AS AN OFFERING TO GOD

1. Paul exemplified the life of responding to Jesus' sacrificial service, by becoming a sacrificial servant of Christ himself
2. Paul admonishes us to "work hard to show the results of your salvation"
3. We are to be like Paul
 - a) We are all to be pouring out our lives as a liquid offering of thanks and gratitude to God
 - b) And as Paul says, we have reason to find joy and rejoice in the privileged opportunity we have to be participating in the saving work of God.

C. IT IS IMPORTANT WE KEEP IN MIND THE BIG PICTURE THAT SERVANT MINISTRY IS PART OF

1. That it is an essential part of God's nature, and of what he is always doing
 - a) His whole plan is based on the sacrificial love and service of His Son
2. We are called to serve him by continually participating in his work of serving, reconciling and setting right the world
 - a) Bringing care and support, comfort, peace and practical help and healing to those in need
3. In doing this we are always on duty, always involved, always preparing for our master's return, when we will be rewarded

Luke 12:35-38

³⁵ “Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks. ³⁷ The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! ³⁸ He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn.* But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready. ⁸

4. We read more about this in

D. JOHN 12:24-26

²³ Jesus replied, “Now the time has come for the Son of Man* to enter into his glory. ²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. ²⁵ Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity. ²⁶ Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me.

* **12:38** Greek *in the second or third watch*.

⁸ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Lk 12:35–38). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

* **12:23** “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

CONCLUSION:

I. LET'S REMEMBER THE STORY OF SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

A. HOW JESUS SERVED HER AND HEALED HER

1. And how she responded in simple, humble, utilitarian serving of Jesus and her family and friends
2. She didn't need a badge, a position, or any great recognition or any specific authority or direction
 - a) She just served because she has been ministered to by Jesus
 - b) She served out of gratitude
 - c) Jesus had given her a new lease on life and she used it to serve

B. AND IT IS SERVICE, NOT SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE OR RIGHT BELIEFS OR RULE KEEPING THAT MAKES US TRUE SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST

1. Engaging in humble, loving, service and care makes us active and effective members of his church, his kingdom
 - a) And makes us ready for the fullness of his kingdom when he returns
2. Because the greatest in the kingdom are those who join Jesus in serving those in need, whoever they are, and wherever they are

C. PRAYER
