

## Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 1/31/21

Mark 1:29-39 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.<sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her.<sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.<sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door,<sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.<sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him,<sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else-- to the nearby villages-- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."<sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

In the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

I know a man who didn't like something that a member of his church was doing. So he took it upon himself to give that person an ultimatum – she had seven days to stop doing what he found offensive or the congregation would kick her out of the church.

The problem was he didn't have the right to do what he was doing, and no one else knew he was doing it. While a congregation can, under certain circumstances, remove a member, individual members like this man don't have the authority – by themselves – to simply remove someone they don't like.

Our text today is about authority, and whether or not Jesus had the authority to do the things that he did. Let us consider today how:

### Our Epiphany Lord Reveals His Authority

1. Authority over disease (vv.29-31)
2. Authority over Satan (vv.32-34)
3. Authority over sin (vv.35-39)

#### 1. Authority over disease (vv.29-31)

To have authority means to have the power or the right to do something. Parents make the rules in their household because they have the God-given authority to do so. The police hand out speeding tickets and arrest people because the law gives the power, the authority, to do so.

In our text, Jesus shows us that he has authority or power over disease and sickness. We read from the gospel of St. Mark: **As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her.**

Several things stand out in these verses. Catholicism claims Peter as the first pope, and also claims that priests must not marry, but remain celibate throughout their lives. Yet Peter, we're told here, had a mother-in-law. It is reasonable for us to assume that Peter – maybe, just maybe – had a wife as well.

St. Luke in his gospel tells us that Peter's mother-in-law had a **high fever**. She was seriously sick with something worse than a minor case of the sniffles. If it was minor, Jesus wouldn't have bothered the master to come and heal her. Yet Peter was also confident that Jesus *could* heal his mother-in-law.

When Jesus actually healed the sick woman, it didn't look miraculous. He just took her hand and helped her out of bed. **So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.**

You and I know from personal experience that when we've been seriously ill, we don't just jump up out of bed and feel normal. It might take several days or even a week or more for us to feel a hundred percent normal. Yet when Jesus heals this woman so completely that she feels well enough to get up and wait on all thirteen of her guests.

The comfort for us in our lives is realizing that our Lord Jesus in heaven still has the power to deal with our hurts, aches, pains, sicknesses and diseases. And so we pray to him knowing that he does feel compassion for the sick, as he showed by healing Peter's mother-in-law. And like Peter's mother-in-law, we desire to show our thanks to our gracious Lord for all he has done by serving him in whatever ways are open to us – teaching, serving, raising our children, our offerings, or in whatever way we can.

## **2. Authority over Satan (vv.32-34)**

In these verses, Jesus showed us that he now only had power of sickness and disease, but he has authority over Satan. **That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.**

Wouldn't it be nice if we could get rid of our problems by simply saying, "Go away?" Unfortunately, we know that it doesn't work that way. We can't make a blizzard go away by wishing for it to go away or talking to it.

Some of the people around Capernaum were possessed by demons. Since demons are normally more powerful than we are, people can't usually do anything to a demon. Yet the demons of hell knew who Jesus was, and we're told that Jesus didn't even allow them to speak at all, **because they knew who he was**. Imagine! Not only did Jesus have the ability to cast these evil demons out of the people they possessed, but he had so much power that he could stop them from speaking so much as a single word! Such authority! Such power Jesus shows!

The devil constantly tempts us to sin. But we know that our Lord Jesus is even more powerful than the most powerful of the evil angels. Yet by faith we are more powerful than he is. If we simply say, no, he can't harm us, he can't touch us. Luther, in his hymn *A Mighty Fortress* reminds us that one little word – the word *no* can fell Satan.

## **3. Authority over sin (vv.35-39)**

Finally, Jesus shows us that he also has power over to forgive sin. Our text tells us twice that Jesus **preached**. Another translation for the word preach is to say that Jesus **proclaimed the good news**.

The good news is that we sinners have a Savior, someone to rescue us from the punishment we so richly deserve. We have a Savior whose blood is so holy, so precious that Almighty God accepted as the payment not for one person's sins, but for the sins of the whole, entire world. Jesus' blood could do this because it was not the blood of a mere human being, but the blood of God himself that was shed on the cross for us.

St. Mark tells us that Jesus preached in the synagogues. What do you suppose he talked about? Undoubtedly he pointed to the many prophecies of the Old Testament that foretold what would happen to the Christ. He could point to passages such as Isaiah 53, which **reads. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering ... he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.** (Is 53:2-5, selected)

Jesus didn't just talk about the problems we face; he did something about them. Our Lord Jesus displays his power and his authority to us. By healing the mother-in-law of Simon Peter so quickly and so easily, he shows us that he has power of disease and sickness. By casting our demons, he displays the power he has even over the demons of hell. And through the cross and the preaching of God's Word, he showed us that most important of all, he has power to forgive us for our sins. Amen.