

Peter's Mother-in-Law

2021-07-25

Let's read Mark 1:29-31.

Mark 1:29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

The setting

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were called to be apostles (Mark 1:16-20)

I would like to go backwards a little bit and get the setting for this beautiful story of Peter's mother-in-law. I think the background will help us to apply this passage. Verses 16-20 happened the day before. It was Friday, and I'll start reading at verse 16:

Mark 1:16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

Mark 1:19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. 20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

These four men had met Jesus earlier according to John chapter 1, and they already knew Jesus to be the Messiah. So when the Messiah actually asked them to follow Him as His disciples, they jumped at the opportunity. What a privilege. These four men were on top of the world - they were serving the prophesied Messiah. It was exciting.

This takes place on the Sabbath (v. 29a with verses 21-28)

I'm sure Peter was still pumped when he got up the next day to go to Church. It was the Sabbath, and Sabbaths were usually wonderful days of worship and rest - days to completely leave the business details behind and to focus upon the Lord and upon other people. So the business of Peter, James, John, and Zebedee was completely shut down for the day. They and all their servants would have gone to church (what they called synagogue), except for perhaps a servant or two who could take care of Peter's mother-in-law. Maybe even Peter's wife stayed behind to do that. But actually, the house was right next door to the synagogue, so it is possible that some slipped over a couple times to check in on mom. But verse 21 says,

21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

It would have been wonderful to hear His teaching. But if the disciples thought that this would be an ordinary Sabbath, they were mistaken. The whole Sabbath became a whirlwind of activity. Verse 23:

Mark 1:23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!"

Did you know that demons have no problem being in church? That's where this demon was; he was attending church. Most churches don't cause demons much anxiety because their preaching is so shallow. But if Jesus is present, and the sword of the Word is powerfully at work, and the Holy Spirit is powerfully at work, demons will sometimes manifest and create a scene. I've had that happen a couple of times. And if that ever happens again, you don't need to worry. Though the service might be interrupted for a while, demons can be dealt with. But the main point is that demons are OK with going to church - especially if they are religious spirits. Verse 25:

Mark 1:25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

Peter's house (v. 29)

Verse 29 shows that it was still the Sabbath when they went into the house:

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

This was my go-to verse when I was criticized by FP church legalists who claimed that inviting people over to your home on the Sabbath is breaking the Sabbath. They believed that the only two things allowable on the Sabbath were private and public worship. I asked if they took a shower, dressed, or ate breakfast, and if any of those things were private or public worship. Some actually didn't shower or eat. But you know what? Jesus didn't have any of those hangups. He knew that the Sabbath was a day of feasting, rejoicing, fellowship, refreshment, and social interaction. It was the chief of the Festivals in Leviticus 23. It wasn't a day to be a recluse; it was a day intended for worship and fellowship with God's people. And He modeled true Biblical Sabbath activity throughout the Gospels. If you want to know good ways to keep the Sabbath, just imitate Jesus. Sometimes he went on a walk. Sometimes he hung out with a smaller group. But He did set the day apart just like the Old Testament commanded.

Anyway, Peter and Andrew invited Jesus over for lunch, and He didn't have any qualms in taking them up on that. Notice that the text says, "they entered the house [or as some translate it, "the home"] of Simon and Andrew." And the reason I make that distinction in translation is that Matthew and Luke tell us that the house belonged to Peter. But it is clear that Andrew lived there too. Maybe he wasn't married yet, so Peter's house was home to

both of them. This shows a generous streak in Peter. But so does the next verse, where we have the first mention of his mother-in-law.

Simon had a mother-in-law living in his house (v. 30a)

Verse 30 says,

But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once.

In the world, mother-in-laws are the brunt of bad jokes. But Peter had a very good relationship with his mother-in-law. I guess it is possible that Peter's wife had no brothers to care for her and so the responsibility defaulted to Peter. But that would be a rare circumstance. Ordinarily when a father died, the sons would care for the widow. But either there were no sons, or Peter's house was somehow a better choice. Anyway, Peter and his wife were very welcoming of others. They welcomed her mom into the home permanently and they welcomed Andrew into their home until he could get married - and he does get married later. And on this Sabbath they welcomed their business partners, James and John. And they welcomed Jesus and any other apostles who might have been called by Jesus up to this time. Sabbath hospitality is a great Sabbath activity. I highly recommend it.

Just as a side-note, we saw in a previous sermon that Peter, James, John, and Zebedee were all partners and were likely quite wealthy. And this was likely a rather large spread-out hacienda with plenty of guest rooms. The huge size of the house can be seen from four later references to it in Mark, where quite a few people are being accommodated there. If you look at the second picture in your outlines, the ruins in the foreground are a very large house that was right next door to the ancient ruins of a first century synagogue. And many have concluded that this was Peter's home.¹ It seems to fit all the evidence. It very well may be. If so, it was pretty large.

¹ For example, Grassmick says, "This house became something of a headquarters for Jesus when He was in Capernaum (cf. 2:1; 3:20; 9:33; 10:10)." John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 110. France says, "Mark will from time to time mention an οἰκία (7:24; 9:33; 10:10) or οἶκος (2:1; 3:20; 7:17; 9:28) as the place where they met, away from the crowds, and while in two of these cases his geographical notes indicate a different location (7:24; 10:10) the others are either specifically set in Capernaum (2:1; 9:33) or belong to the general Galilean ministry, which seems to be based there. Thus, while Mark may well have developed the literary use of 'the house' as a symbol of privacy and instruction, he seems to have based it on an actual family home where Jesus was known to have been resident. What was already a typical extended family (two brothers and a mother-in-law are mentioned, suggesting a sizeable ménage) thus became for a period even more crowded. (The identification of this house as underlying the octagonal Byzantine building uncovered by the Franciscans near the synagogue in Capernaum, while not proven, is entirely plausible.)" R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A*

This means that Simon was married (see also 1 Cor. 9:5)

But let's think for a moment about the phrase, "Simon's wife's mother." It clearly indicates that Simon Peter was married. That's a rather embarrassing phrase for the Roman Catholics who mandate celibacy for popes and priests. Well, their supposed first pope was married. The Roman Catholics might respond that his wife must have died before Peter was called to be an apostle, but that is flat-out contradicted by 1 Corinthians 9:5, which clearly says that Peter traveled with his wife when 1 Corinthians was being written, as did all the other apostles. They all had wives. Roman Catholics might respond that the literal Greek is a sister, but did all the apostles travel with one of their literal sisters? No. Virtually all commentaries I own say that the Greek is crystal clear that they traveled with their believing wives. Roman Catholics might again respond that the Roman Catholic Church has the right to impose new standards, but Paul said that even his choice of celibacy was a temporary choice and that Peter and the apostles had the right to have wives - as did he if he wanted to. It says, "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" Cephas is another name for Peter. The word for "right" there is ἐξουσία, which refers to God-given authority. So Rome cannot take away what God has given. That would be to fight against the authority given by God.

And I will add that Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 calls the mandated celibacy of the Roman Catholic church a doctrine of demons. Let me read that. It says,

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry...

That's the first of his list of doctrines of demons. If demons produced that doctrine, it is no wonder that it has resulted in such horrible sexual abuse and other demonic activity in that apostate church. Peter had nothing to do with such a false teaching.

This shows the ignorance of RC vows of celibacy for the clergy

J. C. Ryle is right on target when he says,

Let us not fail to observe here that Peter, one of our Lord's principal apostles, had a wife... How this fact can be reconciled with the compulsory celibacy of the clergy, which the Church of Rome enforces and requires, it is for the friends and advocates of the Roman Catholic Church to explain. To a plain reader, it seems a plain proof that it is not wrong for ministers to be married men. And when we add to this striking fact that St. Paul, when writing to Timothy, says that "the overseer must be ... the husband of but one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2), it is clear that the whole Roman doctrine of clerical celibacy is utterly opposed to holy Scripture.²

Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 107.

² J. C. Ryle, Mark, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 10.

Of course, that is only one of many unbiblical doctrines that Rome holds to. It is sad to see so many Protestants becoming Roman Catholics. Rome has abandoned the true catholic faith. It's clear that Peter had a mother-in-law. OK, enough on that. Let's move on.

Her husband apparently died

Apparently Peter's father-in-law had died. There doesn't seem to be any other explanation of why she was living in Peter's home. And from a phrase we will look at shortly, we will see that she served Peter and his wife very well while living there.

She was not independently wealthy, so was dependent on Peter

We can also conclude that she was not independently wealthy, so was dependent on Peter. But that didn't mean that she mooched off of him. She served as she was able. Obviously there does come a time when the elderly are just as dependent as an infant is and may not be able to serve.

Her sickness and healing (vv. 30-31)

It was severe enough to lay her out in bed (v. 30)

But now we get into her sickness and healing. It says, "she lay sick with a fever." She was flat out on her bed. She didn't have the strength to get around. Did Peter's wife stay with her during church? Or was it a servant? We aren't told, but life did go on - but not for her. Life came to a complete standstill for this mother-in-law.

She had a fever (v. 30)

Mark simply says she was sick with a fever. Luke adds that it was a μέγας fever, which could be transliterated as a mega fever, or a high fever. The law of God gave general guidelines that helped to distinguish three levels of fever: qaddahat (קַדְדָהַת), which refers to the beginnings of a fever, dalleqet (דַּלְעֶת), which refers to a mid-range fever, and ḥarḥur (חַרְחֹר), which refers to a very severe burning fever with high temperatures. The latter fever tends to lay people out and sometimes even make them delirious. She had that high fever. She is no doubt secluded from the rest of the household in her bedroom, with perhaps Peter's wife or some servants caring for her.

It's interesting that Jesus and the apostles weren't afraid of catching whatever it was she had. Maybe she had malaria. We aren't told if it was a contagious sickness or not. She was no doubt secluded in her bedroom, but life went on as usual - including inviting guests to the home after church.

They told Jesus about her condition (v. 30)

But as soon as Christ entered the house, they told Him about her condition. In Luke it says, "they made request of Him concerning her." So far, the only healing He had done was of a

demoniac, but if they made a request, they must have asked Him to heal her. After my sermon on the woman who touched Christ's tassels, Mary Anne pointed to an ancient tradition based on Malachi 4:2 that the Messiah would come with healing in his wings, which that tradition take as the edges of His garment or the tassels of His garment. So maybe there was a Scripture that the woman with the menstrual flow could have faith in. In any case, the Messiah was many times prophesied to heal, and it makes sense that they would ask Him even at this early stage of His ministry to heal.

He entered her room, rebuked the fever (Luke 4:39), took her by the hand, and lifted her up (v. 31a)

The moment he heard about her condition, He went to her room.

So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

The boldness with which Jesus expected an instantaneous healing can be seen by the fact that He lifted her up and it was *while* He was lifting her up that she was healed. Luke 4 adds an interesting detail. It says that Jesus "stood over her and rebuked the fever" (Luke 4:39). Stein's commentary says,

This is the only account in Luke where Jesus addressed his healing words to the disease rather than the person. The fever was rebuked as the demon was in Luke 4:35, 41. Does this imply that Luke associated this illness with Satan (cf. 13:16)? Although Satan is often associated with illness (Acts 10:38; cf. Testament of Solomon 18:20, 23), we will see in the next two verses that Luke did differentiate between illness and demon possession.³

So he leaves that question open. But I read that comment because the rebuke at a minimum indicates that disease should be seen as an enemy that we come against. But it is intriguing that at least sometimes, disease and fevers can be caused by demons. But whether a disease is a result of the demonic or simply a general result of the curse of the fall, *it is seen as an enemy* rather than as a friend. Can God use sickness to sanctify His people? Yes - just like He can use the sinful persecution of our enemies or of Satan to sanctify His people. But does that mean we should embrace our illnesses? No. We should embrace God's *purpose* in allowing the illness, but it is perfectly proper to seek all means at our disposal to remove the illness and not simply be passive about it. I've seen way too many people just passively accept the fact that they are permanently sick and no longer ask for healing. They think that is submission, but it is failing to see sickness as an enemy. And rebuking it in the name of Jesus may be one of those things that ought to be considered if you have not been healed so far. Obviously God is sovereign in how, when, and if he will heal. But we do need to look at every angle to make sure that we have done all that is our duty to do.

And by the way, *if* a disease is a result of the demonic, it doesn't matter what amount of medicine you take, it will not help because the demon is still there. The demonic needs to

³ Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 164.

be dealt with first. And last week we saw that sickness is sometimes discipline for sin, so sin needs to be confessed before we will be healed according to James. Those are additional possibilities to consider when healing has not happened. I have a brief summary that shows over 20 reasons for suffering, with sin only being just one of them.

She was instantly cured (v. 31b)

In any case, it says that the fever left her. And that actually ties into what I have just said as well. The Greek word for “left her” is ἀφίημι and means “to dismiss or release someone or someth. from a place or one’s presence.” It could be that the word is only being used metaphorically and that it didn’t actually travel anywhere else. But that too is interesting language. It is like the sickness is cast out.

She was instantly strengthened (v. 31c)

But not only was she instantly healed, but she was instantly strengthened. Some people who get rid of a disease still have the lingering effects of weakness. But she was able to walk, whereas earlier she was bed ridden. This was not a fake healing or a mind-over-matter healing. This speaks to the power of God’s healing grace.

Her first impulse was to serve (v. 31d)

And the last thing that it says about her is, “And she served them.” I love that phrase. She had been served by others during this sickness, but she now returns to what she was used to doing - serving. What a lovely end to a short story. This shows her natural impulse was to love serving. She didn’t stop to feel sorry for herself. The moment she found herself well, she got going on helping with the dinner that everyone would be eating, and that the servants had no doubt prepared. Herbert Lockyer comments,

Serving was such an essential part of her make-up that even in the thrilling, excited moment of her recovery she could not refrain from doing menial yet necessary tasks.⁴

And it might be asked, is serving breaking the Sabbath? Obviously not if the serving is related to Sabbath celebration - preparing food being part of that service.

She continued to serve (Mark 1:32-39; 2:1-12)

But let’s park a bit longer on that word “served.” When God saves us, He saves us to serve Him. When God heals us, He heals us to serve Him. Our life is not our own. It is certainly not supposed to be consistent with laziness. If we are saved, we are God’s bondslaves to do His will. And that word “served” is the same word that is used of deacons and elders. You could translate it as it is elsewhere, “she ministered.” God does not have a sacred-secular

⁴ Lockyer, Herbert. All the Women of the Bible (p. 221). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

dichotomy as if church work is service for God and everything else is not. We are to do all of our labors as service for Christ.

And this woman gladly continued to serve in the rest of the book of Mark. For example, look at chapter 2:1. This is such an interesting passage. I didn't even realize the connection until this past week when studying for this sermon. Mark 2:1.

Mark 2:1 And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house.

Whether this is translated as "at home" or "in the house," commentators say *that this was certainly Peter's house, which was Christ's base of operations whenever he was in Capernaum.* Verse 2:

2 Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. 3 Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. 4 And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

This puts a whole new spin on this story, doesn't it? They broke into Peter's roof. If I were Peter, I would be a bit upset. He's going to have some major repairs to make. Now, those friends no doubt paid for the repairs, but Peter and his mother-in-law will have some cleanup to do. And this is frequently the case when your home is open for ministry. We have gladly spent thousands of dollars on repairs as a result of the wear and tear of ministry. It's all wrapped up in counting the cost of ministry. It's nothing to be upset about. Verse 5:

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." Mark 2:6 And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." 12 Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Mark 2:13 Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.

Mother-in-law and wife may have been left behind to manage the mess. It's not always convenient to be related to a celebrity. But there were other occasions when this house was a buzz of activity. Turn to chapter 9 where Jesus and the apostles stay at "the house" overnight. Let me read that, because many commentators say this proves that Peter had some children. I believe he did. Which means that his mother-in-law had grandchildren that she was helping with. Mark 9, verse 33.

Mark 9:33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.

This indicates that Jesus is talking to the twelve privately. The crowds have *not* been invited in. He's gone into the house to stay overnight and He leaves to teach the crowds in chapter 10. So the twelve are visiting Peter's house and nobody else. Look at verse 35:

35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

It's only the twelve that are being taught, but Jesus notices a child in the home, and calls the child over to use Him as a teaching illustration. This child is obviously used to Jesus being around, and has no objection to being taken up into Christ's arms. Understandably, the other children in the home immediately gather to see what is happening, and Jesus refers to those other little children as examples of those in the kingdom who are united to Christ. These are all clearly Peter's children.

We can infer from this that the faith has successfully been passed on from grandparents, to Peter and his wife, to their covenant children. Both Clement of Alexandria (Strom iii.6) and the early historian Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. 3.30.1) say that Peter and his wife had children, and this verse seems to confirm that. But what is cool is that these covenant children are said by Christ to be so united to Jesus that receiving them is receiving Christ, and therefore receiving the Father. There is a genuine work of God's grace in these little ones. What a wonderful passage on covenant succession. What a wonderful passage to give meaning to the work of moms who daily receive Christ by receiving and ministering to their children. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells you moms, "inasmuch as you did it to one of these of these My brethren, you did it to Me." The least of these is a reference to infants and toddlers.

Additional applications for our homes

Make Jesus the Lord of your home and the Lord of your children (Mark 1,9)

But let me end by making two more applications. Jesus was obviously the Lord of Peter's home. As head of the home he invited Jesus to come in and to use the home in any way that He desired - even if that meant inconvenience. Commentators point out that Peter's home was a base of operations any time Jesus was in Capernaum. This would have cost money for Peter, but it would have cost time and effort for all who were in the home, including the mother-in-law and the children. Jesus was that home's familiar guest. And I would urge each home represented here to make sure that Jesus is your home's familiar guest. Let me give you six ways illustrated in Peter's home by which you can tell whether that is true or not. And I will phrase each one of these ways as questions.

1. First, does your home find great delight in going to church and listening to the Scriptures preached? This home did in verses 21-28.

2. Second, does your home have the word of Christ discussed freely in it - not just in devotions, but in your ongoing conversations? This home did in chapters 1 and 9 as well as in other places in the Gospels.
3. Third, does your home find ways to serve Jesus? This home did. Even the children were no doubt part of the hospitality to the crowds that came.
4. Fourth, does your home bring its needs to Jesus in prayer? Is prayer the first and immediate impulse of your home when a need comes up? In Mark 1:30 it says, "they told Him about her at once," and in Luke it says they made a request concerning her. That's a kind of prayer - "Lord, Peter's mother-in-law is sick and needs healing." When the kids get an owie, teach them to take it to Jesus first.
5. Fifth, does your home experience regular *answers* to prayer and does your home remember to praise God for those answers to prayer? This home did. They saw the mother-in-law healed and later that evening they saw numerous people prayed for and those prayers answered. That is the kind of environment that will cause our children to see the reality of God's grace. Regular answers to prayer are a huge faith booster, and we encourage homes to have times when even the children can praise God for answers to prayer. You might be surprised to see some of the answers to prayer that your children come up with.
6. Sixth, does your home instantly change when it realizes that it is out of accord with God's Word? This home did, as can be seen by the embarrassing confrontation of their pride in Mark 9:33 and following. Do we instantly change when confronted by the Bible?

Those six tests are good tests of whether Jesus really is Lord of your home. And when Jesus is the Lord of your home, huge changes can happen. It will sometimes spark rebellion and opposition. I've told husbands that when they start taking the leadership like the Bible commands them to, it may cause more problems initially, but that it is always best to stand in Christ's chain of command than to abdicate that chain of authority. Charles Spurgeon, when commenting on this passage, said,

God has given us little kingdoms in which our authority and influence will tell for the better or the worse to all eternity. There is not a child or a servant in our house but what will be impressed for good or evil by what we do. True, we may have no wish to influence them, and we may endeavour to ignore our responsibility, but it cannot be done; parental influence is a throne which no man can abdicate. The members of our family come under our shadow, and we either drip poison upon them like a deadly upas, or else beneath our shade they breathe an atmosphere perfumed with our piety.⁵

So make Christ the Lord of your home and of your children. Make sure that everything in your home revolves around Jesus. That includes the permanent guests of your home - like

⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Best House-Visitation," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons, vol. 21* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1875), 303.

Andrew and Peter's mother-in-law. They too were under Christ's Lordship and submitted to Peter's headship.

Let your home become a leverage point for Christ in society (Mark 1:32-34; John 1:38-51)

But last, let your home become a leverage point for Christ in society. I know many homes that want Christ to bless them *within*, but get nervous at the thought of using their homes to reach their neighborhoods and their cities. Let me read Mark 1:32-34 one more time:

Mark 1:32 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

The whole city was gathered at the door. That's tremendous influence. That home was influencing the entire town. But admittedly, it's also inconvenience. We saw earlier that they continued to have inconveniences, including having their roof torn up. It's impossible to have families into your home without experiencing wear and tear on the furniture. It doesn't mean that you can't ask parents to corral their children to some degree; you can. That can actually be a part of your teaching ministry - to teach other parents how to parent and how to discipline their children. But the point is that when we are sold out to the Lord in ministry, our house, our clothing, and everything that we have is sold out to the Lord. And God sometimes tests how sold out we are by giving us occasions of loss, expense, and inconvenience. We just need to accept the fact that some loss is involved when we seek to reach out to our community. My pastor in Escondido said that the transition for him was when a drunk they were witnessing to in their home puked on their new sofa. They had to just give the sofa to the Lord as they reached out to this broken man.

But The central issue that I see in this point is the potential power of the home as a leverage point. We underestimate the power of our homes; we really do. We tend to think about other leverage points - if only Christians were in the White House, or if only Christians controlled the film industry, or the media, or were billionaire business men. But God wants us to start where we are - in our homes. Any home can be a leverage point for service and advancing the kingdom if its occupants have an attitude of (as Karen Main's worded it in her marvelous book on hospitality) open heart and open home. Any home can model the blessings that come when Christ is Lord.

Does Christ also bring division to such homes? He does. There are homes where Christ's Lordship actually produces a great deal of pain. For example, Matthew 10:25-39 says this:

35 For I have come to "set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law"; 36 and "a man's enemies will be those of his own household." 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

But that last point is the key - when we are willing to lose our life for Christ's sake (and that might mean losing favor with others, losing money, losing comfort - when we are willing to do that) it is then that we actually end up finding life and enjoying life to its fullest.

And I'll end by saying that Christ redeemed us to serve, and there is great fulfillment in serving Christ and serving His representatives. I love the last sentence of Mark 1:31. I think it exemplifies what made Peter's mother-in-law so special. It says simply, "And she served them." That's *her* in a nutshell. May we find delight and fulfillment in serving as she did. Amen.