

# Home Study

## Mark's Epiphany



TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2021

### INTRODUCTION

Each week in our worship services at Hope, we read a list of prayer requests. Most of these prayers ask God for healing. Members of the church, along with our friends and family members, are struggling every week with COVID-19, cancer, heart disease, chronic pain, depression, and so many more physical/mental illnesses.

When Jesus walked on this earth, he demonstrated a tremendous compassion and sympathy for those who were suffering. Mark, in his Gospel, shares account after account of the miracle power of Christ restoring health and wholeness to broken people.

### TODAY'S READING

In yesterday's story, Mark told us about Jesus casting out an evil spirit from a person, and exhibiting his authority over the spiritual forces of evil in this world.

Today's story shows Jesus bringing healing to a wide range of people. Mark describes the Lord granting physical healing to many, while continuing to drive out evil spirits in others. Mark wants his readers to know that Jesus' power and authority is absolute.

In your Bible, read Mark 1:29-39. As you read, take note of anything that catches your special attention, or surprises you.

Notice, in verse 29, the transitional words Mark uses: "And immediately he left the synagogue ...." He makes it clear that today's story immediately follows yesterday's story. This is typical of Mark's Gospel, and we'll read similar transitional phrases in the chapters ahead. Mark portrays Jesus moving along quickly from one ministry scene to the next. There is a definite sense of purpose, intentionality, and urgency to the work of Jesus.

Mark tells us about how Jesus healed a relative of Simon (later known as Peter), one of his brand-new disciples. But Mark is pretty skimpy when it comes to relating the details.

Was Simon's mother-in-law mildly sick, or was her life in peril? Did Jesus say anything to her at her sickbed, or did he just help her up without words? Was Simon's mother-in-law aware of who Jesus was, or was he a total stranger to her? And what motivated her to immediately begin to "serve them" (verse 31) the moment she was healed?

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What is Mark's main point in sharing this story as he does? He wants the reader to know that Jesus has power and authority. He can cast out evil spirits, and he can rid a woman of a fever, too. Jesus easily, effortlessly (and, perhaps, even without a word) restored Simon's mother-in-law to a healthy, whole condition.

If you were in the room to witness this healing miracle, what might you have wanted to ask Jesus? If you meet Simon's mother-in-law in heaven one day, what might you want to ask her?

While this isn't the main point of today's story, it is interesting to note that Simon is a married man. Celibacy among church workers, a later requirement in the Roman Catholic Church, was definitely not a standard practice in Jesus' day.

Read verses 32-34 again. Try to picture this night-time scene in your mind. From where did all these people come? How did the word spread? What were they all saying about Jesus? Was this a quiet, orderly scene, or was it clamorous and chaotic?

Do you imagine that everyone present that night had a deep-rooted faith in Jesus as the Son of God, or not?

Do you suppose it was easy for people back then to make the shift from excitedly watching Jesus do miracles to truly understanding and accepting his divine nature?

Do you think it's easy for non-Christians to come to faith in Jesus Christ – a person who lived two thousand years ago, and who's described as being able to perform mighty acts of healing? What would make such a belief system difficult to take root?

Read again verses 35-39. Why do you suppose Jesus chose to take some time by himself for prayer? What pressures was he under already in his public ministry?

Immediately after praying, Jesus decides to move on. Talking with his heavenly Father seems to inspire him to take new ministry actions, and advance to new ministry venues.

Close by thinking for a bit about your own prayer life. Does talking with God about your life ever cause you to take certain actions for God? Should it?

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, healer of all, I/we pray today for all those in our congregation, community, nation, and world who are hurting and suffering. Thank you for your compassionate care, and for your concern for the well-being of all people. Help me/us to show the same measure of love, for all who are burdened and troubled. Grant healing to ... *(names)* ..., and restore them to a healthy, whole condition. Amen.