

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: March 8, 2009

Keeping the Mission in Focus

by Dan Trygg

“And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. ³¹ And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. ³² When evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. ³³ And the whole city had gathered at the door. ³⁴ And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. ³⁵ In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. ³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for Him; ³⁷ they found Him, and said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’ ³⁸ He said to them, ‘Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.’”

Mark 1:29-38

After telling the story of Jesus' encounter with the man with the unclean spirit in the Capernaum synagogue, Mark (in characteristic fashion) moves rapidly to the next event. This is the benchmark story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which provides a chronological point of comparison in the first three gospels. He states, “**immediately afterwards they came out of the synagogue and came into**” Peter's house. This would have been literally the case, since now we have unearthed both the first century synagogue and what is believed to be Peter's house, **which is only 84 feet south of the synagogue**. Thus we see why Peter's house was so strategic for Jesus' ministry. It afforded a location just down the block from the city synagogue, where the Jews gathered and where Jesus often was invited to preach. **Here we learn that Peter had a wife, and that her mother also lived there, along with Peter's brother, Andrew**. (This also was likely the place that Jesus moved to when He left Nazareth – Matt. 4:13.) Peter's wife is later mentioned in the NT as traveling with him on his apostolic journeys (I Cor. 9:5). The same passage mentions that she was a believer, and that the other apostles likewise were married, and were accompanied by their wives, as well. [The idea of requiring celibacy for people in spiritual leadership certainly had no basis in the early church. Apparently, being married was the *norm* for spiritual leaders in those days (cf. I Tim. 3:2,12; Tit. 1:5,6). A man's relationship with his wife and family provides a good measuring stick to see if he is ready/capable of being a spiritual leader. Paul argued that singleness had its advantages (I Cor. 7:25-35), if a person was given grace by God to remain unmarried (Matt. 19:10-12). To *require* people to abstain from marriage, however, was not a teaching from God (I Tim. 4:1-5). Quite the contrary, marriage was to be held in honor by all (Heb. 13:4; cf. I Cor. 7:28,38).]

As soon as they arrived home from the synagogue, they spoke to Jesus about the condition of Peter's mother-in-law, who was laid out by a severe fever. Jesus showed His compassion and respect for an elderly woman by personally coming to her side. **Standing over her, He took her hand and spoke a word of sharp rebuke to the fever, and it left** (Lk. 4:39; Matt. 8:15). **She was instantly well**, as is evidenced by her immediate resolve to get up and serve Jesus and the others. (By the way, the same verb for “rebuke” is later used by Luke to describe when Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves during the storm, and they instantly stopped and the lake became calm – 8:24. It is valuable for us to observe the various methods Jesus employed in the performance of the miracles. These are not to be understood to be formulaic, but simply as a tool to be employed. God will tell us what to do or say at the moment. We must obey the leading of the Spirit, *at that time*.)

Remember that it had been the Sabbath when these two miraculous events occurred (vs. 21). The Jews reckoned their days from sundown to sundown, so we see that **when it became dark, ...and the Sabbath was over..., people of the city began to bring their sick and demonized to Peter's door**. Evidently the story about the healing of Peter's mother-in-law *also* spread throughout the city, in addition to the report of the expulsion of the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue. Note here again that, although most translations refer to those who were “demon-possessed”, this is a very poor translation. The word in Greek is a participle, “being-demonized”. It says nothing about *possession*, or even the level of control or influence that a demon had in the life of the one it was invading, ...only that the person was somehow being affected by a demonic presence in their life in some way or another. The manifestation of that influence could take a very wide variety of forms or expressions, as we shall observe as we continue through Mark. It is enough to say that the Bible makes a distinction between normal sicknesses, and the maladies caused by a demonic source. When the demon was removed, the symptoms began to go away.

According to Luke 4:40, **Jesus was laying hands on every one of them, and many were healed** (Mk. 1:34). On the surface, there seems to be a discrepancy among the three gospel accounts. **Matthew records that He “healed all”** (8:16), while Mark records that “He healed *many*” (1:34). So, which is it? The problem is resolved by a closer look at

both the language itself, and by recognizing again the nature of the gospel writings. The gospels were meant to tell the story of Jesus in broad brush strokes, not minute detail. Remember that these accounts contain only a small select sampling of Jesus' activities. Matthew's intent is to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah (8:17). To this end, he emphasizes that there was no kind of sickness or affliction which Jesus could not heal (4:23,24; 8:17). Mark, however, is content to emphasize that there were a *great number* ("many") of people who were delivered and healed. He is *not* necessarily saying that people went away without being healed. He is saying, rather, that **there was a whole lot of healing going on**. The thrust of the word for "many" does not mean just "some" or "most". It means a *large number* of people. Matthew's version again emphasizes that He cast out the demons with just a word of command, and that He was not permitting them to speak, because they knew who He was.

With all that activity going on *after* sunset, you can imagine that people kept coming to Jesus until very late into the night. Nevertheless, we find that **Jesus got up early the next morning, even before it was light, and went out to a desolate place**, probably a place outside the city limits, **where He could truly get alone**. He was praying there, apparently for some time. The Greek implies ongoing action, and the description of the background setting would seem to confirm that. It is important for us to observe that **Jesus felt the need to get away for some alone time with His Father**, ...time without distraction, ...time without interruption. Even though He had been traveling, preaching and healing for over a year, His awareness of His dependency upon His Father had not diminished. **He had learned by this time that, if He wanted to find time alone, He was going to have to take extreme personal measures to secure that time**. Don't you think He was tired? Don't you think He would have enjoyed a morning where He could sleep in? He knew, however, that to get time alone, He would have to get up while it was still dark, steal out of the house before anyone else knew He was leaving, and go way outside of town, so that no one would know where He had gone. **Some time after this (Jn. 5:19,20), Jesus spoke of His dependence on the Father. He said that He could do nothing from Himself**. Instead, He did what He saw the Father doing. Because of His relationship with Him, the Father revealed to Him what it was that He was doing. This is why it was critical for Jesus to get alone with God the Father. He had to not only get refreshed and renewed spiritually, but He also needed to keep close to the Father in order to clearly perceive what the Father wanted Him to do next. **Because He valued His time with God, and saw how critical it was, He was willing to sacrifice His physical comforts in order to obtain unhurried time with Him**.

We find out from Luke 4:42 that **the multitudes came seeking Him that morning**. Some who had probably gone away the night before, or others who had heard about it from their friends or family, came in the morning to bring their sick people to Him to be healed. When they found that He was not in Peter's house, they began to look for Him elsewhere, but **Peter and the other disciples hunted Him down and found Him**. They probably had a pretty good idea where He would go, having traveled with Him extensively already. **When they found Him, they mentioned that "Everyone is looking for You"** (Mk. 1:38). They thought that it was enough that a crowd was gathering for the Lord to minister to. Certainly, this *must be* God's will. They did not want Him to miss this tremendous opportunity! **Jesus, however, had different plans**. He had been able to get away from the noise, confusion and intensity of the crowd, and had quieted His soul in the Father's presence. There, He heard once again His marching orders. He had not been sent to just one location. **He was to go to other cities as well, preaching the good news of the Kingdom**. Luke's version of this is more definitive than Mark's record. Jesus told His disciples, "Also to other cities it is necessary for Me to preach the Kingdom of God, because for this I was sent" (Lk. 4:43).

Jesus had a very strong sense of mission. Over 40 times in the gospels He mentioned that He was sent. He was *sent* to preach release to the captives (Lk. 4:18). He was *sent* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24), and therefore did not travel far beyond the borders of Israel. **He came to do the will of Him who sent Him** (Jn. 5:30; 6:38). He came to work the works of Him who *sent* Him (Jn. 9:4). The conscious focus of His life was to fulfill the purpose for His existence on planet earth. He clearly understood that He was put here to get a job done, and He was determined to accomplish whatever the Father intended for His life. **In order to do that, He knew He needed to maintain conscious communication with His Father, and He needed to instantly obey all that the Father revealed to Him**.

In this brief look into His life, we see how **Jesus saw that it was crucial to invest in unhurried, uninterrupted quiet time with His Father in order to discern His leading**. In this scenario, the good was the worst enemy of the best. What looked like a blessing, ...what even looked like spiritual hunger..., could have deterred Jesus from His appointed task. This was not a time to try to harvest much, or spend time in teaching or training more. Right now, Jesus was to be out covering ground, scattering the seed of the gospel. At some later time, He or others would be called to come through again to harvest and disciple those who want to follow the King. **What about you? Do you know that you, too, are a "sent one"?** God has appointed you to also bear fruit (Jn. 15:16; Eph. 2:10). **You, too, need the counsel and empowerment that is to be found in extended time with God. You, too, need to hear His marching orders. We need to keep our mission in focus, so that we do not get deterred or distracted from the will of Him who sends us**.