

Which Activity Is MOST Important?

Services: Sunday, 2/4 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 2/5 at 7 PM

Church Year: Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany – 2018

Ash Wednesday is February 14; Join Us at 11 AM or 7 PM

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: We all have many options in our lives, so we *choose some and pass on others*; then, *seeing the options we have chosen*, we try to prioritize them from *most important* to *least important*. Therefore, let's apply those same skills to today's gospel reading.

Mark 1:29-39 includes these four activities: (1) healing the sick, (2) casting out demons, (3) praying, and (4) preaching. As we move through the text, *identify which activity YOU THINK is most important!*

1. **Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law**: As we harmonize the events in Matthew and Mark, we conclude that Jesus taught and cast out a demon in the synagogue in Capernaum *on Saturday afternoon*.
 - a. ²⁹ **And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.** // Simon (Peter) and Andrew were brothers and lived together in the same house in Capernaum, along with Simon's wife and his mother-in-law. Apparently Jesus had been invited, with James and John, for dinner.
 - b. ³⁰ **Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her.**

³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. // It seems that Jesus was not told about the illness *until he had entered the house*; in other words, He went there to eat, *not to heal*. From Luke, *the doctor*, we are told that she had a *high* fever. Then Jesus took action – not as a doctor, by diagnosing and prescribing, *but as the Son of God, by simply taking her hand and granting immediate healing!* And how do we know she was healed? Because “**she began to serve them.**”

2. **Jesus Heals Many Sick and Demon-Possessed:**

- a. **³² That evening at sundown** [*after the Sabbath, when the day of rest had come to an end*] **they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons [demon-possessed** – *not just troubled by demons, but controlled by demons*]. **³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door.** // Lenski noted: “**Since the Sabbath had passed, the work of bringing all these sufferers to Jesus could be performed without violating the law of Sabbath rest**” (84). Also, Capernaum, *at that time*, “**had a population of about 1,500**”¹ people, so it was QUITE A SCENE with “**the whole city**” being gathered at the door.
- b. **³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.** // Mark recorded that

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capernaum>

Jesus healed and cast out “many”; did that include everyone? Yes! Matthew records that Jesus “healed all who were sick” (8:16), while Luke records that Jesus “laid his hands on every one of them and healed them” (4:40). Regarding the demons that Jesus expelled, it included “all those that came into his presence” (Lenski, 84).

3. **Jesus Prays; Jesus Preaches:**

- a. ³⁵ **And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.** // In other words, *He talked with His Father in heaven.* The Bible records that Jesus prayed on various important occasions; for example, “all night [Jesus] continued in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12) *just before He chose His twelve apostles.* Therefore, *knowing that prayer is important and powerful,* let us do so **daily** and **as a FIRST RESORT** *in every time of decision and need!*
- b. ³⁶ **And Simon and those who were with him** [*probably Andrew, James, and John*] **searched** [*literally, pursued closely, hunted*] **for him,** ³⁷ **and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.”** // Think about this series of events: The “whole city” had gathered at Peter’s door and were richly blessed on Saturday evening; then, very early on Sunday morning, those same people returned FOR MORE – *more blessings, more of this great Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh!* When Peter said, “Everyone is looking for you,” he was implying to Jesus that

the people wanted more from Him, *so Jesus should immediately return to them!* So now the dilemma, what to do? Jesus already knew the answer *BECAUSE of His time in prayer!*

- c. ³⁸ **And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next [or neighboring] towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”** ³⁹ **And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.** // So, *without hesitation, Jesus laid out His plan:* The people of Capernaum have heard my preaching and witnessed many miracles, *now I must go to other towns to preach there!* Then He did!

Conclusion: So which activity is MOST important – *healing, casting, praying, or preaching?*

- ✦ When we are sick, **healing** is wonderful – *but the benefits are only for this temporal life.*
- ✦ For the demon-possessed, Jesus’ **casting** out was so powerful – *but it did not save their souls.*
- ✦ **Praying** is important and powerful, so we should pray often – *but it does not save us or others.*
- ✦ **Preaching** is MOST important, *so Jesus chose it over healing and casting – BECAUSE God is at work, by His Spirit through His Word, to make us sorry and give us faith, thus to save our souls and make us His very own!*

Let us pray: Father in heaven, since life in this twenty-first century is so complicated, please ✦show us what is MOST important and ✦move us to make such things our priorities!

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