

Mark 1:29-39 *As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" ³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

Who is this man?

1. Jesus' compassion
2. Jesus' power
3. Jesus' purpose

Who is this man? That's the question we have been asking during the season of Epiphany. Who is this man? We asked that question about Jesus as we saw him walk to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. There we saw the Holy Spirit descend on him in the form of a dove and we heard the Father call him his dearly loved Son. Who is this man? He is the Son of God anointed by the Holy Spirit for his mission. We followed him to Galilee where he called his disciples to follow him. We saw him in the synagogue in Capernaum where he drove out a demon. Now, today we walk with him from the synagogue to the home of Simon Peter.

Who is this man? We see, first of all, that he is a man of compassion for the hurting. *As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ 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.*

We see Jesus Christ, the Son of God, not somewhere else, not far away, but right here among his people. He does not stay in the Temple or some other sacred place and demand that we come to him. He knows our condition. He gets that we "cannot by our own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, or come to him." So, he comes to us. He is Immanuel, God with us. We see him in the home of Peter, healing Peter's mother-in-law. We see him in the midst of sick people, healing them and casting out demons. Christ comes to us also. He comes to us in his Word, in his Supper, in our meditations with Scripture. Who is this man? He is full of compassion for people.

Did you notice the timing? It was after sunset. Jesus was in the synagogue and healed Peter's mother-in-law on the Sabbath. People saw what he did at the synagogue. They heard what he did for Peter's mother-in-law. But they had to wait until the Sabbath ended at sundown. Then they came. They came in droves. *The whole town gathered at the door.*

How long did Jesus stand there on Peter's front lawn attending to the needs of the people? We are not told, but we can assume that you didn't heal a whole town's full of sick people in a couple minutes. Who is this man? A man full of compassion. A man who put other's needs before his own.

What we learn as we watch Jesus is that there is never a time we can't "drop in on him." He's never too busy or too tired to listen to you about your aches and pains. There is no matter too small to take to Jesus in prayer. As one Christian put it: "If it's too small to pray about, then it's not big enough to worry about." (Daniel Habben)

We might wish that we didn't have any of these problems at all, but he recognizes that we do need them and we need him. Sin causes big trouble in our world. God does not allow us to think that this life is a wonderful, trouble-free ride. He sends us reminders that the world is evil; we are small, limited creatures; and life here on earth does not last.

Who is this man? We see in this lesson that he is a man of compassion and we can be confident that he cares about us and our problems. What's even more comforting is that Jesus has the power to do something about them. Look at the power of Jesus when he healed Peter's mother-in-law. *So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The*

fever left her and she began to wait on them. With a touch of his hand, she is healed – healed so completely that there are no lingering side effects of the fever. She immediately jumps up to serve.

Then he went on to heal everyone that was brought to him. Mark doesn't record any exceptions. Mark didn't say, "He healed the flu but not the cold. He healed the Crohn's disease, but not the cancer." No, Jesus healed them all.

I want you to notice something else here. Mark makes a distinction between healing sicknesses and driving out demons. Modern scholars want us to think that the evangelists didn't understand illness. They want us to think that the evangelists labeled as demon-possession whatever they didn't understand. No, they knew the difference.

But the difference didn't matter, because Jesus had power over them all. The demons couldn't resist him. They couldn't even speak because Jesus wouldn't let them. Who is this man? He is a man who uses the power of God for our good.

You know the story of Job. If ever there was a man who suffered, it was Job. At one time he was respected, but no longer. At one time he had family and wealth and health, but now it's all gone. And he fell into the sin of despair. Job said, "I have been allotted months of futility." (Job 7:3) In other words, he felt his whole life had been one big waste of time. Then he said, "Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again." (Job 7:7) Job's tomorrows were unthinkable. Nothing good was in his future.

What could bring you to a point like this? Well, perhaps, like Job, you lose your entire fortune. You lose everything. Maybe, like Job, you lose a child. Maybe, like Job, you lose your health. Maybe, like Job, you lose your reputation. You become the laughingstock of the town. What could bring you to the point of despair? Actually, none of these things. What would bring us to despair is that in the midst of these trials we forget that Jesus has the power to take care of us. We forget that Jesus can and will make all things work for our good. It all comes down to faith. Do we trust his love for us? Do we believe he has the power to help us? Who is this man? He is a man of compassion and power, but also a man with a purpose.

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ *So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.* When do we see Jesus pray? What times stand out to you in the prayer life of Jesus? To me, it's the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Why did he pray then? For the same reason he got up early and went out to pray on this morning. These were both times when he was tempted to lose focus on his mission, to look for glory without the cross. So, he prayed. No matter how popular he might become, his life would not have been a success if he had not fulfilled his mission.

How do you measure success? Reaching the top of your profession? Making a good living? Having a nice house? Advancing in your company? Retire without any financial worries?

Peter came looking for Jesus because he was popular with the people. Everyone was looking for him. If he is popular with the people, then more people will listen to him. He could force the High Priests out of power, take over the nation and get his message to everyone and he wouldn't have to go to the cross. Wait a minute. That's the problem. If being popular was Jesus' goal, he could have reached that easily. But it would have been at the expense of his mission. His goal was not popularity, but the cross. Jesus didn't come to set up a health clinic in Capernaum or to keep everyone physically fit. He has come to tell the world about their sin and what he's going to do about.

Who is this man? He is a man of compassion and of power. But he is also a man with a purpose. That purpose is all wrapped up in his compassion and his power. That purpose was always focused on saving us from our sins. In his compassion for us, he could not leave us floundering under the weight of our sins. And with the power of God, he could do something about it. He gave himself on the cross because he loved us. He gave himself on the cross because, as God, his death counts for everyone. He has the power to save us.

Whatever sins keep you awake at night, whatever troubles your soul, bring it to Jesus. Trust his purpose, his power and his compassion. Trust that he will never let you down.

Who is this man? We have getting to know Jesus during this Epiphany season. Now, we will begin to follow him on his mission, his journey to the cross for you and for me.