

Conversations on
Mark 1:29–39

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! John Mayer’s song “Waiting on the World to Change” describes how young people often feel helpless in addressing the world’s problems. Listen to the song. In what ways do you resonate with the lyrics? How can you change waiting into action to express your beliefs?

WHAT is important to know?

Early on in this Gospel, we learn that Jesus will not shy from broken bodies or demonic spirits. In fact, in typical Markan hyperbole “all” the city comes knocking on Simon’s mother-in-law’s door looking for exorcism and /or healing. In addition, in these opening verses from Mark, we are introduced to a most important character in his story—“the crowd.” “The crowd” grows in fascination over Jesus, a theme that will take a traitorous twist in chapter 15. In these early scenes in Mark, Jesus doesn’t try to draw a crowd; in fact, he tries to escape them. (*Gary W. Charles*)

- ✪ Read Mark 15:9–14. How does the crowd react here? Why?
- ✪ After healing the crowd, Jesus goes away to pray. How does prayer empower healing ministry?

WHERE is God in these words?

Jesus grabs her hand firmly, to raise her up. The expression of healing is surprising because it uses the same Greek verb for “to get up” that is used to report Jesus’ resurrection in Mark 16:6. As important as Jesus’ expression is the response of the mother-in-law; she began to serve them. Service is a key topic in the call of Jesus. This woman gets up and turns the Sabbath into a day of service to others. Jesus does not command her. She is the one that assumes the initiative. Her service cannot be understood as a woman’s menial work, but as a true messianic ministry. This woman is Jesus’ first servant and joins him in the radical announcement, in action, of the kingdom of God. (*Ofelia Ortega*)

- ✪ How does God work to touch, heal, and raise us to new lives of service?
- ✪ What is our responsibility as active, not passive, recipients of God’s healing mercy?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Jesus “came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her.” The power of touch, of intimacy, of nearness, to make whole: Jesus must have understood that which we are too often too slow to comprehend. Love not expressed, love not felt, is difficult to trust. Theologically speaking, that is the reason for incarnation. God knew the human need for nearness. Jesus is the incarnation of God’s love, which makes it all the more demanding (if frightening) to realize that for some people, we are the only Jesus they will ever meet. (*P. C. Enmiss*)

- ✪ Where have you been touched by God and healed at some time in your life?
- ✪ When do you experience the nearness of God?
- ✪ For whom might you have been the only Jesus they will ever meet?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

As the summary in verse 39 notes, Jesus goes forth “proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.” Preaching and healing. This represents the ministry of Jesus in a nutshell, and it represents still the ministry of those who follow him. After Simon’s mother-in-law is restored to health, she serves. This is how Jesus himself will live and what all of his followers will be called to do (Mark 10:45). (*Mike Graves*)

- ✪ What are some examples of healing touch needed in the world today?
- ✪ What are some examples of service that proclaim the kingdom of God?

Thank God for the gifts of healing and wholeness.