

Chris Murphy

May 10<sup>th</sup> 2026

Luke 4: 38-44

Sermon Title: A Story of Kindness

Luke 4:38-44

### Healings at Simon's House

38 After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. 39 Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

40 As the sun was setting, all those caring for any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. 41 Moreover, demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.[a]

## Jesus Preaches in the Synagogues

42 At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds began looking for him, and when they reached him they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said to them, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.” 44 So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.[b] (This is the Word of the Lord...)

Let us pray...

Mother’s Day is an opportunity each year for us to celebrate the gift of women in our world. It is a day to remember the sacred feminine, the unique gift that women bring as image bearers of God. This year I thought I would remind us of a story in Scripture about a mother. For me, the story is a reminder of the importance of kindness.

In our story this morning I want to explore the kindness of Jesus, the kindness of a mother, and lastly the importance of rest.

Our story begins with Jesus entering Simon's house. Now Simon according to Luke's gospel is not yet a fully called disciple. He is still getting to know what Jesus is all about. Simon, who will be later called Simon Peter, is a married man. He is living presumably with his wife, his wife's mother, and maybe others. It was customary in Jewish households for extended family to live under one roof. We have an obscure Scripture in 1 Corinthians 9:5 that says Cephas- the Apostle Peter traveled with his wife during his missionary journeys, so although we do not meet Simon's wife in this story, she likely is there in the house, but just not mentioned because the focus of the story is on the healing of the Mother in law.

So in our story, Jesus enters Simon's house and learns that Simon's Mother in Law has a high fever. They ask him about her and Jesus heals Simon's Mother in law by rebuking the fever. Immediately this woman gets up and begins serving them.

What I love about this story is this woman's heart of kindness in response to Jesus' kindness. Jesus heals the woman and she gets right up and decides to show kindness to those in her home.

In Jewish culture, having people visit one's home was an invitation to show hospitality. I wonder if you ever have visited a monastery, such as Mount Angel Monastery in Mount Angel, Oregon. During my sabbatical a couple summers ago, I spent four days experiencing the hospitality of that monastery. In the Catholic tradition at monasteries, there is a culture of hospitality. When you enter a Catholic retreat center, the brother monks or sister nuns treat you as an honored guest. The idea is that strangers are to be treated as one would treat Jesus himself if he came to our door.

In this story, this mother treats Jesus and his followers like her own children. She gives them the gift of hospitality. Here at our church, we have a number of people with the gift of hospitality. Gina

Chandler currently embodies this gift well with our Women's Gathering group.

Kindness and hospitality are key expressions of love that we all can develop in different ways. I recently went to a gathering in Salem on May 1<sup>st</sup>, which is called May Day. May Day is a day each year when people speak out for labor rights and especially a time to remember immigrant rights and the importance of farm laborers and others who keep our economy running through labor, such as at farms or in the hospitality industry. Think of all those folks, especially immigrants who offer care for others within hospitals, restaurants, or hotels, retirement communities, or by helping grow the food that we serve in our restaurants and homes.

At this May Day gathering, I participated with a group of close to 100 clergy. Thousands of others were with us in Salem. We listened to speakers, many from the Latin American community, in front of the Capitol building in Salem and some of us marched together. What I

noticed about the clergy involved in this group is that about 2/3<sup>rd</sup> were female ministers. There were also a number of participants who identified as members of the LGBTQ plus community.

All of these clergy came together to support immigrants and other laborers who need to be treated with kindness. It was a blessing for me to participate with this group and to join with all those gathered to support such a worthy cause of protection for immigrants, and the need for a living wage for all workers.

Simon's Mother in law represents the gift of kindness and hospitality and Jesus also demonstrates kindness as he heals her. Do you notice that the miracle of Simon's Mother-in-Law being healed creates a ripple effect? Pretty soon everybody starts coming to Simon's home asking for Jesus to heal them and to cast out demons. Jesus is full of kindness and seems to spend the whole evening healing the sick. Imagine you had a healer on your block in your home, chances are the word would spread and people would

start flocking to your home to experience a healing. This sometimes happens at churches as well. I pray that our church will have an anointing of the Holy Spirit for healing and that many will come here to experience God's healing presence. I encourage you to pray for our church to be a place of miracles. We are already starting to see it.

I am convinced Jesus is alive today and is actively looking for ways to bring healing through churches and other individuals or groups who believe in the power of healing prayer. I know whenever we talk about healing, it brings up questions about why we do not always see healing the way we wish. Last Sunday our guest preacher, Grady Zickefoose, reminded us to be persistent in prayer- to keep going with our prayers and I think that is a good reminder for us as we pray for healing. Our healing ministry must also partner with medical professionals, wellness rituals, nutrition, exercise, and all other means to support healing and wholeness in our lives. I encourage us

to think of Newberg First Presbyterian Church as a healing center.

Let's pray for us to experience miracles here.

Let's pray for us to experience physical and emotional healings and when we experience grief or loss, let us also experience comfort, strength, and grace for the parts of the journey of life that are too difficult to face without the gift of community.

In our story, the Mother in law and Jesus are the highlighted people who show kindness. Mother in laws sometimes are not portrayed so nicely in movies, so I am glad our story portrays Simon Peter's Mother in law in a nice way. I just wish Simon's wife could have also showed up in the story. By the way, I have a great Mother in Law named Irene Jorgenson. (Wave at the camera)

I want to take a moment as say something about Scripture and women. Generally, the reason we don't always see women highlighted as much as men in Scripture is that our Holy Scriptures were written at a time when society was even more patriarchal than

today. In our short story, Simon's Mother in Law's name is not even mentioned and we do not meet Simon's wife at all. So what do we do with a Bible that does not highlight women enough? Well, we look for stories where women are mentioned and we talk directly about the value of women. We remind folks that women were also disciples even if they were not listed among the twelve disciples. We remind people that Mary Magdalene became a great Apostle and possibly was Jesus' closest friend, even though church history sought to silence the full impact of Mary Magdalene on the early church. One primary way to support women within the Christian Church and to honor the women that are highlighted in the Bible is to be clear as leaders of the church that women are entirely equal to men and that people of all nations, ethnicities, and other expressions of diversity are to be treated with dignity and human rights.

We as Christians need to honor all people as gifted and called for leadership. I am sad to say that I still have female clergy friends who get up to preach in a church and see people leave because they do not wish to listen to a female preacher. That has not happened to my knowledge in this church, but it is a common problem for female ministers.

Mother's Day feels like a good day to honor all women for their gifts in leadership and to remind us to support equality in all of its forms.

The Christian Church must never support any form of discrimination. One of the blessing of my wife's work as a Professor of Church History and Theology is that she meets wonderful female students through her work with Fuller Seminary and Portland Seminary. Today, many seminaries have more women and men. God is equipping the church like never before with the strength and kindness of female leadership. We just need to embrace the gift of women and all those who have historically been marginalized.

There is an aspect of our story today that I want to highlight. It is a reminder to both women and men. As we work for human rights and seek to embody the kindness and hospitality of the kingdom of God in our world, we must also take time for rest.

On this Mother's Day, I want to remind us all of the struggles of women in our world. One thing I notice it is hard for women to feel freedom to do is rest. My wife Karen, who gave me permission to share this with you by the way, is an example of one woman who often times feels like she carries a lot of responsibility. She is a professor, mom, wife, gardener. She does a lot to care for our home and for our family and yes, it is important for me and other men to share the responsibilities that women are often culturally tasked to do. But beyond that reminder, I just want to say today that it is hard for women in our society. In other cultures, women sometimes have the major responsibility of carrying water in jars on their head as they keep their family alive. Some women are fleeing with their

children from places of war. Our society puts pressure on women more than men to look beautiful all the time and to stay unnaturally thin. It is a mess the pressure we put on women and I just want the women here to know that we see you, we love you, we accept you as you are, and this is a church that is proud of you. We honor your leadership. We honor all your gifts. You are beautiful, intelligent, creative expressions of our Mother/Creator God. You are created in God's image and you are beloved and beautiful.

And because life is not easy for women and really its challenging for everyone of us in different ways, I want to remind us of the importance of rest and prayer. Jesus in our story goes out into nature after his ministry time of healing and hospitality in partnership with Simon's Mother in law. Jesus goes out early in the morning to pray. He takes time for solitude.

Friends, our world often tells us we need to stay busy all the time.

We are often told our worth is in our service. Jesus certainly spent a

lot of time showing love, kindness, and compassion for people, but he also took time to rest in prayer in the beauty of nature. At our church, we have the Peace Garden- thanks to Ciaran Hynes, Lory Albright, Carol Swehla, James Wen, Nancy Backes, Nancy Thurston, Sylvia Burns, Lish Mannerter, Marc Mannerter, Karen Murphy, Shirley Kolb, and many others who have given donations or physical labor to care for our beautiful garden.

Our Peace Garden reminds us that in the midst of important service, we need to take time to rest and find renewal. Our Peace Garden reminds us that God is like a Mother who creates this beautiful world for us to enjoy and steward. May we learn to rest, pray, and enjoy God's creation.

In our story, Jesus enjoys a time of solitude in prayer, before he is invited to once again spread his love and kindness through acts of compassion. My prayer for all of us is that we can feel deeply treasured by God and that we take time to pamper ourselves, to just

enjoy being God's beloved from time to time without the need to serve others. Life requires balance, a rhythmic of work, rest, and creativity.

As we seek to show love, hospitality, and many different forms of kindness in our world, may we also take time to experience God's tender love for us. (Finished with story of Isaiah 40:31 , spoken over me by my mom 40 years ago before when I underwent open heart surgery).

Let us pray...