

## SERVING OTHERS

Not many minor Bible characters are mentioned in three of the four gospels. I am. And by minor, I mean not major. Major like my son-in-law. He is probably the second most important person in the Gospels, after Jesus. Major major, Jesus. Jesus healed me.

If you go to Capernaum in Israel today, there's a house, and a giant modern roof protecting the house. It's the house that many believe belonged to my son-in-law or to me. You can take a tour, or day trips from Tel Aviv even, see the entire area, look around, imagine what it was like to be me...where was I? Oh, sorry. Who am I?

Who am I? That's a bit of a tricky question. The Bible doesn't give my name. but describes me as the mother-in-law of Peter.

All three gospels tell essentially the same story.<sup>1</sup> Matthew says that Jesus came to our family's house and saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched my hand and the fever left me. I got up and began to do my thing, serve our guest. Not that I'm ranking them, but Jesus was the most important guest we ever had. And I've got good recipes, great ones if you ask me, depends on the season, what's available, fres...Where was I? Mark adds that James and John were with him, and he took my hand and helped me up. Luke, a doctor, says I had a high fever, and the fever left me when Jesus rebuked it. Immediately, I began to serve them. You've tried hummus, right... (she catches herself and brings it back)

Let me add a little more color to the Bible story. Peter and Andrew were originally from Bethsaida, a small town on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee. They moved to Capernaum when they began working. Peter and Andrew, began working with the fishing company owned by Zebedee, the father of James and John. James and John had been in our family's house many times before Jesus healed me.

It is only five miles from Bethsaida to Capernaum, so why would the boys make that move, what could Peter and Andrew possibly be thinking? Three main reasons,

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39

Bethsaida is on the east side of the Jordan River, while Capernaum is on the west side. At best, it was inconvenient to cross the Jordan River. More importantly, Bethsaida was in the territory of Herod Philip, while Capernaum was in the territory of Herod Antipas. Crossing the border took time and sometimes cost an extra tax. Lastly, Zebedee located his fishing company on the west side of the river because the largest fish processing factory was in Magdala, on the west side of the river and Sea of Galilee. Makes perfect sense. Oh, and a fourth reason. My daughter.

I wish I had time to tell you about my daughter and her marriage to Peter. My daughter, oh, let me just say...Perhaps I will get to do that another time. Today, I want to tell you more about my reaction to Jesus when he healed me from my high fever.

My reaction...I immediately began to serve Jesus and his companions. You might think it rude that I didn't at least say "Thank you." Or you may think, sweet mother-in-law of St Peter, why would they even let you serve at all with what you've just been through. However, either way, it wasn't rude. In my world, a true form of gratitude was immediate service.

You might also think it rude that I didn't immediately bow down and worship Jesus as the Son of God. But my healing took place early in the ministry of Jesus, and none of us had an inkling that Jesus was anything other than a Jewish prophet and teacher a powerful one, for sure, but the Son of God?!

Some people might conclude I served Jesus and his companions because I was a woman, and in a patriarchal society women were subservient to men. You misunderstand our society. Sad really. I mean, I know every time period thinks they are increasingly more enlightened, or happier or what have you. We had a strict order to our society where everyone had their roles, but the fact was, we all were servants, men and women.

Some of us liked to arrogantly pretend that we were not, but one look at a Roman soldier was a reminder that at the very least, all of us served the hated Emperor of Rome. Don't even get me started on the emperor.

I'm not an educated person, but it seems to me that the main difference between the people around me, people in my sphere, was their attitude. Some of us willingly had the attitude of a servant, while others clearly did not.

Many years after my healing, Paul admonished the Romans to have the same mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, Jesus had become a servant to the Jews.<sup>2</sup> Jesus himself said that he had come to earth to serve, not to be served.<sup>3</sup> He told his followers that the ones who rule should be servants.<sup>4</sup>

In your world, what do servants in God's service look like, what do they do? Again, I'm not an educated person, but it seems pretty simple to me. Use the resources God has given them to meet the needs of others.

I got up and served them a meal, and you can bet I put my heart and soul into those time tested, family favorite dishes. Jesus healed me! I was ready to do what it is I do and rock that kitchen! After a long day of healing others, trust me, a home cooked meal made with lots of love, that's exactly what they needed.

Back to my son-in-law, Peter. In the modern world, Peter is held up as the most important of all the apostles. He is portrayed as the leader of the early Christians, who stood up against the Jewish leaders. That is all true, but do you know what? Peter considered himself a servant, to Jesus, yes, but to those around him.

He healed and taught people because that was the best way he could serve them. He didn't have much money, but he did what he could for the benefit of others. And by doing so, he became the leader of the early Christians. He was the true example of a servant leader.

It goes without saying, not everyone cooks like I do, or teaches and heals like my son in law, but you have something to offer. Time, words of encouragement, a special talent? There are an unending number of ways to serve those around you. And when you're serving them, you're really serving Jesus. Serving them in his name, and you can tell them that, it's a good thing people know that Jesus loves them so much that he would send someone to serve them in some way. Now, of course, my way would be cooking, but that's just a suggestion, for what it's worth. From me. You have your own unique way to serve Jesus by serving others.

---

<sup>2</sup> Romans 15:5-8

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45

<sup>4</sup> Luke 22:26