

JJ¹

Mankind has been riding the horse for a very long time. One of the tools used in riding a horse is the spur. Records and archeology show spur use dating back 400 years before Jesus was born. The spur is used to create discomfort, even pain to motivate a horse to action. This pain would be bad if the horse rider is being abusive. But there are times where this pain is good. It might be used to spur a horse on to win a race, or to escape danger or win the day in a battle.

There are a lot of things in our own lives that act like spurs...failings, injury, illness, loss. There's all kinds of things that cause us pain in our lives. Our first reaction to pain is always to think it's bad. But just like a horse rider using spurs on his horse can be good, even life-saving, so too with **THE SPURS OF LIFE**.

Today we pick up right where we left off last week. Jesus has just entered the Galilean fishing village of Capernaum. He's gone into the synagogue, taught the people with authority and amazed them. He then amazed them all the more when he cast out the evil spirit from a member of their synagogue.

Mark tells us that as soon as Jesus was done teaching in the synagogue, he left and "went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew." Peter must

have had a fairly substantial house. Peter, his wife and children (if they had any), Peter's brother Andrew, and Peter's mother-in-law all lived together. This also seems to be the house where Jesus would stay when he was in Capernaum. It's a busy house!

"Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed, sick with a fever. Without delay they told Jesus about her. He went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, when the sun had set, the people kept bringing to him all who were sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door. He healed many people who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons."

Put yourself in Capernaum that night. Just imagine all those sick and demon possessed people in a fishing village not much larger than Baileys Harbor (though with more people living in it). These sick and demon possessed probably weren't in synagogue to hear Jesus teach. Picture their loved ones coming home from synagogue and unable to stop talking about what they had heard and seen. "He teaches as one with authority, not like our teachers! He even drove out that particularly troublesome evil spirit from that poor man!" How eager these families must have been to find an answer to their own longing: "Maybe me

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

answer to their own longing: "Maybe me too!" "Maybe my loved one too!"

There's no telephone. There's no email. Yet obviously all these people who had been to synagogue were thinking the same thing! When the Sabbath is over, they come pouring in to Peter's house to find healing in Jesus. The spurs of life have spurred them on to find Jesus. But notice how they keep the Sabbath. They couldn't walk more than the distance to synagogue and home again on the Sabbath. Remember that the Jewish day ended when the sun set and new one began.

Imagine how long it must have seemed for the sun to set that day! Imagine them standing in their doorway or at a window, watching, waiting for that last sliver of sun to sink below the horizon so they could go and see Jesus!



And what about you? Do you look forward to seeing Jesus? I hope you all eagerly look forward to seeing him perfectly in heaven, but what about here? Do you look forward to seeing Jesus here in God's house, where, so long as I don't get in the way, you get to sit down at Jesus' feet and learn from him? Do you long to be here? Do you wait for morning's light on Sunday? Or do you find something else in your heart and

even on your lips when dawn breaks on Sunday morning?

Children, does Sunday School at 8:45am on a Sunday morning excite you and get you going, or do you think it's taking away from playing with your toys or watching cartoons? Teenagers, ninety-somethings and everyone in between, is 9:00am Bible Class part of your Sunday joy, or is it just too much to ask of your routine on a Sunday morning? All of you, is 10:00am on Sunday morning something you wait for in eager expectation, or is all this just a chore, a bore, just something you're supposed to do, or worse yet, something you do because by simply being here you think you manage to stand in God's good graces or by being here you make yourself better than those who aren't?

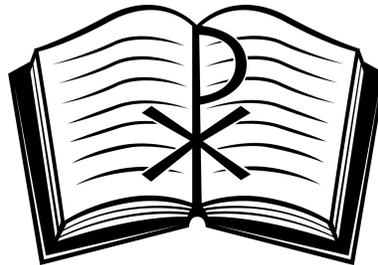
You see, these people in Capernaum knew where they could find real rest. They knew where to find the medicine for the sickness of sin. They knew where they could find the One who could soothe and even remove the **THE SPURS OF LIFE** with his healing Gospel. They knew, they sought it out, and they cherished it. Do you? Do the **THE SPURS OF LIFE** drive you, spur you to seek Jesus who heals you, or are you letting the **THE SPURS OF LIFE** spur you on to doubt and

indifference, thinking that not only won't Jesus help, but he can't?

Friends, whether you find yourself in doubt or indifference, or spurred on to find Jesus, you need this lesson and you need on a daily basis to see what Jesus has done and what spurred him to do it.

Just think again of the context of that day. How great is Jesus' love! It's already been a long day, yet he still tended to this horde of hurting people. How much greater the love that spurred him all the way to Jerusalem—a place where he would find nothing but pain.

Imagine your greatest pain—Jesus' pain was worse as he suffered in his body and far worse in his soul on the cross. Imagine your greatest loss—Jesus' loss was worse than you can imagine. Jesus' loss was the loss he faced when he became something his heavenly Father couldn't bear to look at. And it wasn't because Jesus' pain and suffering was so great the Father couldn't bear to watch his beloved Son go through that. No, the Father couldn't bear the sight of his Son because his Son was no longer someone he recognized. His Son disgusted him because all our guilt and sin was on Jesus. Therefore the Father turned his back on his Only Son, forsaking him—denying him and his place in the true Holy Family!



And you know what spurred Jesus on to all that? YOU! Jesus' perfect, full, unceasing, unstoppable love for you! That love for you which chose you to be his own before he created the world. That love which gave his life for you on the cross. That love for you which called you in time and marked you as his own in the water and Word of your baptism. The love for you which still claims you as his own today and will when his holy angels usher you to his side in heaven. (Rom. 8:28-30)

Friends, when you consider the spurs Jesus endured on your behalf, you are spurred on to seek the one who brings true healing, whether you find yourself in the midst of life's spurs, or things are calm. Consider Jesus' love for you and you will be spurred on to hunt down Jesus where he may be found: in Sunday School, Bible Class, Worship, the Lord's Supper, Devotions and Prayer.

And beyond your own personal healing for the spurs of this life, we find excellent examples of being spurred on by Jesus' love for us in lives of service and love for others. Look at Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus healed her, and she went right back to work serving Jesus and the others. There's all kinds of service that can and is done just in this congregation that supports gospel ministry, like Peter's mother-in-law. For example, cleaning

church, mowing lawn, shoveling sidewalks, serving on various committees. You are spurred on to service in helping the sick among us who endure their own spurs. And most importantly, you can invite and bring the spiritually sick to Jesus as you bring them into God's house.

All this springs from a thankful heart created by Jesus' love and powerful Word. Friends, let the **THE SPURS OF LIFE** do their work. Let them drive you to your Savior for that which you need the most. Like a horse being spurred on in battle to win and save others, may Jesus love for you spur you on all the more to share Jesus' healing love with as many people as you can! Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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