

I want to break up these sermon notes into two parts:

- An analysis of one Greek verb and how it applies to Peter's mother-in-law.
- An overview of the Gospel of Mark

### **Greek on serving**

διηκόνουν or diakonein is the verb is used for describing service:

- The angels serve Jesus when he is fasting in the desert: Mark 1:13b "he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him." Angels were *servicing* him.
- Peter's mother-in-law serves her family. Mark 1:31 (Jesus) took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her, and she began to wait on them. She began to *serve* them.
- The women who followed Jesus to his death at the crucifixion served him. Mark 15:41 "In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs." They were *servicing* him.
- Stephen is a "deacon" or server. Acts 6: διηκόνουν shows up again but in a different form. "Select seven men from among yourselves to attend (*serve*) tables"

### **Serving is not servile**

In our gospel today, it seems weird to have a Peter's mother-in-law rise from her sick bed to immediately start doing housework. I can't help but think there *was* a degree of "that's what women do" in the story. But I also sense a joy in her renewed health, and she did not want to sit down or lay down again. Serving is a joy. Servility robs joy.

### **Four senses**

In the medieval mind, people did not read scripture like a cookbook. That's what we often do. They read or heard a text on many levels. The classical divisions are:

The Literal Sense – straightforward meaning  
The Allegorical Sense – metaphorical meanings  
The Moral Sense – applying the text to your life  
The Anagogical Sense – spiritual implications

Too much literal and moral - you get a purity culture that oppresses women. You get Peter's mom-in-law serving and cleaning because it is 'what God intended.'

Too much allegorical and anagogical – you get way in your head and heart and are not really engaged with real world problems. You see Peter's mom-in-law as a product of an oppressive society. Where you see something similar today, you won't lift a finger to change anything.

With the four senses in play, you get a powerful story that can be fresh each time you read or hear it. You can find *your* call to serve and pray. You come to know that God is not done with you, or the world.

**Broad overview** Mark can be broken down into the three “acts.” The image below comes from the Bible Project (one of my go-to resources) **Act 1 Galilee** Jesus shows up in grand fashion with miracles, healings, and proclamations. Most love him, a few *really* don't. **Act 2 On the way** - Jesus is still loved, but confusion sets in. People adore him but want to control and shape him in their own image. **Act 3 Jerusalem** begins after the transfiguration; Jesus chooses suffering by entering the holy city of Jerusalem. The reading is in “Act 1” today, so I include this overview:

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