

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. (NIV)

Keep the main thing the main thing. In other words whether it is at work or home or school it is important to keep our main goal and purpose in front of us. Isn't that easier said than done? We get pulled in so many directions. A member sent me a comical email just some time ago about a mother who went out to water her garden. As she was about to start she saw the very dirty car and went to wash it first, then she noticed the mail she left on the front porch. She decided to quick take in the mail and when she threw away the junk mail she observed the trash was full and had to be taken out. But since the mailbox was in the same place she thought she should pay bills first, but noticed she only had one check. I'm sure by now you get the point of this funny joke & sometimes real life situation. This now exhausted mom goes the entire day without ever getting to do what she first had in mind.

So I say again it is important to keep the main thing the main thing. A business needs to keep it's eyes on their target or they will start doing so many other things they will forget the main thing. Same goes for almost anyone on any job, we can get caught up in so many other tasks we may lose sight of our main job and what it is we really need to get done. While this is true of things in this world, it is even more important when it comes to Jesus and His church. We need to keep the main thing the main thing. I pray we listen to and learn from Jesus. Jesus knew how to keep the main thing the main thing. Jesus reminds us of why He has come for us. Thank God that Jesus teaches all his disciples an invaluable lesson this morning about **Keeping the main thing the main thing.**

Jesus had started his public ministry as the Christ. He had already called four men to be His disciples. Peter, Andrew, James and John are following Jesus. They are just starting to learn what the Christ has come to do. They are just beginning to get some on the job training of what the Christ will send them to do. After Jesus leaves the synagogue, the place Jesus went to so often, Jesus arrives at the house of Andrew & Simon Peter. As Jesus is there with these four disciples, Jesus gets news that Simon's mother-in-law is sick with a high fever. *"So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them."*

Jesus performs a miracle - a miracle of healing. Immediately Peter's mother-in-law was not only completely over her fever but her strength was back. She used it to

serve and thank Jesus who had healed her. Ah, is this why Jesus had come? Certainly this is the word that spread because ***“that evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.”*** Can you imagine this scene? All these people came to Jesus to be healed. Word spread like wildfire that Jesus is someone who can take care of your ailments and cure you of your diseases. Were the disciples thinking that now they know why Jesus had come? Just think of how much better our lives would be with someone to heal us from all our sicknesses and pains!

Dear friends, we do learn more here than just the fact Peter was married. We know we do have a God who can heal. In our Psalm today we sang praise to the God who heals all our diseases. All healing must come from God. He gives us medicine and is the source of everything good that can cure us. Yet, is this the main reason why Jesus came? Should we spend all our time and energy as a church proclaiming Jesus as the one who takes care of our physical ailments? Should we take people off the streets and call them in because we have a God who can heal people? Should we start to preach, falsely I should add, a theology of glory, rather than the theology of the cross and promise people that if they become Christians they will have a much better and healthier life on earth? I wonder how Job would have felt about that? Should we tell people if only they really, really believe in Jesus they will be healed from whatever they may have? Is this keeping the main thing the main thing?

There was another thing Jesus did. He drove out demons. They were no match for the Son of God. People brought Jesus the demon-possessed. ***“He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.”*** Again, try to imagine this scene. All these people are plagued by the devil and Jesus has power over these demons. So they flock to Jesus. Jesus drives these demons out but doesn't want or need the devil to proclaim whom He is or what He came to do. Jesus wants people to hear and see for themselves so they can confess with a heart of faith that Jesus is the Christ. But Jesus drives out devils!

Is this the main reason why Jesus had come? Do we want a Jesus who drives out the devils in our lives? Again Jesus has the power to do so. He has the power over the devil and all His temptations. He can help us with our addictions. He can defeat the devil's power. So is this the Jesus we need to proclaim? Do we need to get out on the streets and get out the message that we have a God who can help defeat your alcoholism or your drug addiction? ***“We have one who can drive out the devils of sex or abuse or whatever problems you have in your life. That's why you need Jesus.”*** Is this keeping the main thing the main thing?

Please don't misunderstand what I am saying. Jesus healed. Jesus drove out demons. This was a part of His ministry. Jesus wants to and is able to help us in every aspect of our life. In fact our service theme for today is that Jesus gives meaning to our lives. But there is so much more to what Jesus came to do than provide earthly healing and help. ***“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”***

Jesus goes off by himself as He so often did to speak with His Father in prayer. When Simon and the disciples find Jesus and urgently tell Him that everyone was looking for Him, Jesus in no uncertain terms says that He is going to keep the main thing the main thing. Yes, a loving Jesus healed people. Yes, a loving Jesus drove out their demons. Now everyone was looking for Jesus, but Jesus knew everyone needed Him for something much greater. Jesus reminds them and us why He had come. He came to preach. He came to tell the good news. Jesus is ready to move on so that he could proclaim the Word of salvation to others. He wanted to share a message for all sinners who need saving from their sins. He knew all people need a far greater deliverance. He knew that the main thing that God is to be praised for is, as we also sang in our Psalm, is that He is a God who forgives all our sins and redeems our life from the grave.

That is why Jesus had come. He came to live for sinners. He came to die for sinners. Jesus knew pointing people to the cross where Jesus suffered our punishment is keeping the main thing the main thing. Telling others about a Savior who dies so we can live with God is keeping the main thing the main thing. Pointing others to Jesus who is the resurrection and the life is keeping the main thing the main thing. Simply proclaiming ***“the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,”*** (Romans 6) is keeping the main thing the main thing.

Jesus never strayed from His main task of being our Savior. Jesus never promised a heaven on earth. He never promised a life without sickness or struggles with the devil. But Jesus has promised His Word is eternal. He promises to keep speaking to us with His gospel. He reminds us that is why He came. He came to proclaim a message of hope and love and forgiveness - for all. He came to point sinners to Him, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He points us to a perfect home in heaven with Him where we will be forever free from sickness and the devil. Jesus came to give us spiritual healing & to give our lives meaning. Now like Simon Peter's mother-in-law we look to serve Him with our lives. We want to give glory to our God in all that we do.

And we too want to keep the main thing the main thing. It is alright, even good, to have programs and do all kinds of different things to reach people as a church. But be assured the devil and this world will keep working to pull us away from keeping the main thing the main thing. I pray that Christ-crucified and risen always be at the center of all we do here at Amazing Grace. I pray we realize the mission Jesus gave to us is to preach the good news to all creation. I pray, with Jesus' help and guidance that we always keep the main thing the main thing.

In a few minutes our church council will come up front to be installed. Before that happens, I want to on a personal note say “thank you.” Thank you for your work. I want to say thank you not only to the church council, but “thank you” to all the men and women who serve in this church. The Bible makes it clear that a pastor is to devote the majority of his time to the ministry of prayer and teaching and preaching the Word. It is with your help that this is made possible for me. It is with your help that we can keep the main thing the main thing so that Jesus is proclaimed. To God be the glory! Amen.