

Jesus, the Healer of the Body

Mark 1:17-45

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And walking along beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for **they were fishermen.**

Mar 1:17 And Jesus said to them, Come after Me and **I will make you fishers of men.**

Mar 1:18 And immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

Mar 1:19 And when He had gone a little farther, He saw James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.

Mar 1:20 And immediately He called them. And they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after Him.

Mar 1:21 And they went into Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue and taught.

Mar 1:22 And they were **astonished at His doctrine.** For He taught them as one who had **authority**, and not like the scribes.

Mar 1:23 And in their synagogue was **a man with an unclean spirit.** And he cried out,

Mar 1:24 saying, What *is* to us and to You, Jesus of Nazareth? **Have You come to destroy us? I know You**, who You are, the Holy One of God.

Mar 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, **Be quiet, and come out of him.**

Mar 1:26 And the unclean spirit, **convulsing** him, and **crying** with a loud voice, he **came out of him.**

Mar 1:27 They all were **amazed**, so as to question among themselves, saying, **What is this? What new doctrine is this? For He even commands the unclean spirits with authority, and they obey Him.**

Mar 1:28 And immediately His **fame** went out into all the Galilean neighborhood.

Mar 1:29 And immediately after they had come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Mar 1:30 But **Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever**, and at once they told Him about her.

Mar 1:31 And **He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.** And instantly the fever left her, and she served them.

Mar 1:32 And at evening, when the **sun set**, they brought all **those who were diseased** to Him, **and those who had been demon-possessed.**

Mar 1:33 And **all the city had gathered** at the door.

Mar 1:34 And **He healed many** who were sick of different diseases, and **cast out many demons.** And He **did not allow the demons to speak**, because they knew Him.

Mar 1:35 And rising up quite early in *the* night, **He went out and went away into a deserted place, and He was praying there.**

Mar 1:36 And Simon, and those with him, searched for Him.

Mar 1:37 And finding Him, they said to Him, All are seeking You.

Mar 1:38 And He said to them, Let us go into the next towns so that I may proclaim there also. For that reason I came forth.

Mar 1:39 And He **proclaimed** in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and **cast out demons**.

Mar 1:40 And a **leper** came to Him, begging Him and kneeling down to Him, and saying to Him, If You will, **You can make me clean**.

Mar 1:41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, **I will; be clean!**

Mar 1:42 And He having spoken, the leprosy instantly departed from him and he was cleansed.

Mar 1:43 And He strictly charged him and immediately sent him away,

Mar 1:44 and He said to him, **See that you say nothing to anyone**. But go and show yourself to the priest, and offer those things which Moses commanded for your cleansing, for a testimony to them.

Mar 1:45 But going out, he began to proclaim *it* very much, and to spread about the matter, so that **Jesus could no more openly enter into the city**, but was outside in deserted places. And **they came to Him** from every quarter.

Theme: Praise God for His compassion and for the healing power of Jesus.

Background: Mark's Gospel begins with the story of **John the Baptist who is out in the wilderness preaching, calling people to repentance, and baptizing**. Jesus came along and **asked John to baptize even Him**. As soon as he came out of the water, the Spirit of God descended upon him, and a voice spoke from heaven, "*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*"

From there the newly baptized Jesus went into the wilderness to **fast, pray, and to be tempted** by the devil. If you decide to follow Jesus, are baptized, are led by the Spirit, and if you enter into the spiritual disciplines of fasting and praying, I've always thought you should ward off the devil (make him tremble) and that you should be free of his cunning ways and far less likely to fall into temptation. But Jesus was tempted precisely because he was baptized, led of the Spirit, and was fasting and praying.

It was at a very spiritual time in his life when the devil entered the picture and said, "Hey why don't you jump from the top of the temple and see what happens? Hey, I've got an idea, how about a magic trick in which you can feed yourself – turn a stone into bread. How about instant success? You bow down and worship me and I'll give you power and prestige." That shouldn't happen when you are praying, fasting, and being led of the Spirit.

But, there you are! That's when Jesus was experiencing his most vulnerable moment.

So, if you are going to beef up your spiritual life, don't think that the devil is going to leave you alone. You can overcome the evil one, but it is likely to be a struggle. Your determination to follow after God, will help you in your determination to do the right thing and make the right choices, but don't think you will escape temptation.

Godly men and women do fall into temptation. God is merciful and gives us the chance to get up and try again, but it may then be even harder to overcome. Prayer doesn't chase the devil away, but it does give you power to overcome evil.

After successfully defeating the devil's temptations, Jesus proceeded to call several disciples and to minister.

It's interesting to me to notice that **Jesus calls fishermen** to become "**fishers of men**". Now fishing was never really about fish, it has always been about people. Fishing was a way of making a living for Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They sold the fish, which then provided needed food, meat, and protein for the people who bought and ate those fish. Fishing was a way of providing for people something they needed.

Jesus called those men away from fishing to helping them prepare to give people something else that they needed – instead of providing food for their bodies, they would be providing people with food for their souls. They would be fishing, not in the clean Sea of Galilee, but out in the ocean of life, for people. Now the analogy is a good one, but no analogy is perfect. When fish get caught, it's over for them. The fish are killed, prepared, and eaten.

Fishing for people would be different. When people get caught they are not destroyed, they become saved. They become saved from their former environment – the dark putrid waters of sin which would result in certain death. People who trust in Jesus are rescued from the filth and placed into the pure eternal water of life into which they would thrive. ("I have come to give them abundant life." Jesus said.)

Jesus called these fishermen to become "fishers of men" – they would be going out fishing for people. But of course they didn't know how to do that.

They had never been fishers of people before. So, Jesus immediately began to show them how to do it. He entered a synagogue and began to teach the Scriptures. **His teaching was interrupted by people who had needs. They were sick and lame and blind and crippled. They needed to be healed.**

So, Jesus began to heal people. It was as though he was teaching them to fish by following his example. **Fishing for the souls of men began by teaching God's truth and by demonstrating the love, compassion, and power of God** through His healing ministry.

There were many types of sicknesses. First he healed people who were spiritually sick. An evil spirit possessed some and Jesus cast the spirit out of those people. We don't usually see such things here in America. In my 34 years of ministry, I have only been witness to one or two such healings in which an evil spirit was drawn out of a person in response to prayer in the powerful name of Jesus. I have seen or at least have been aware of a couple of such things while in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Far more frequently we read of **Jesus healing people physically**. It always seems to have a **wonderful spiritual side-affect**. Of course there are many types of such healings, and **many ways in which they take place**.

1. Sometimes Jesus **touched a person** and they were made well as in the case of the man with leprosy mentioned at the end of chapter one.
2. In one case a person fought her way through the crowd and finally was able to merely touch the **hem of his garment** and she was healed.
3. In one case Jesus **spit on the ground**, made some mud, placed it on a man's eye, and he was told to go wash. When he did he was healed. (You may be glad to know that when I pray for people, I never use spit!)
4. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus began his healing ministry by going into the home of Simon Peter where his mother-in-law was sick. Jesus offered her His hand and **He helped her up**. Her fever left immediately and she began to hustle around in the kitchen to get them something to eat.
5. In Mark 2 the story is told of a man who was paralyzed and **brought to Jesus on a stretcher**. The only problem was that He was in someone's

house. There were so many people that no one else could get in. So, his friends, went up the outside stairway to the flat roof of the house, dug a hole through the roof and lowered him down on a stretcher right in front of Jesus. Jesus took one look at him and **forgave his sins**. That was this poor man's biggest need. Just to make sure everyone knew that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins, He also said, "*Be healed. Take up your bed and walk.*"

6. Another time Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath when a man appeared with a deformed hand – an obvious birth defect. Jesus told him to **stretch out his hand** and immediately it was healed. Certain Pharisees began to plot how to kill Jesus over that one. It was, after all, an act of God's healing done on the Sabbath. That, somehow, seemed like breaking the Sabbath law, and such actions were worthy of death. I don't get it, but there you are – that's the way it was.

7. Jesus healed **the blind, the lame, and even the dead**. Both a young girl and a young boy who had died were brought back to life. The gospel of John tells of the friend of Jesus named Lazarus who was brought back to life. That really made the Pharisees angry. They couldn't have a guy running around bringing dead people back to life. Otherwise the whole world might become followers of this man, Jesus. He was executed days later.

Jesus hardly ever healed two people in the same way. Each healing was different and unique. Sometimes Jesus touched them, sometimes He didn't. Sometimes they touched Him, sometimes people were carried to Jesus who had more faith than they did, sometimes Jesus spit, and sometimes Jesus didn't show up at all. In one case He told a man to go on his way, that his child would be healed, and that's what happened.

In the case of Lazarus, he deliberately let him die. Then he brought him back to life. In every case it deeply affected the people spiritually, which makes perfect sense to me. God is far more interested in our spiritual condition than in our physical condition. After all, everyone is going to get sick and die sooner or later. That's life in a fallen world.

But when you die physically, there is still eternity ahead. Heaven is ahead – or ... hell is ahead. The problem (and blessing) about eternity is that it is eternal – it's never-ending. So, any suffering you go through in this life will seem like a mere blip on the screen of eternity – an event so small and

insignificant, that it hardly registers. Eternity is what matters and this life is the time to prepare for it.

Physical healing helps us to recognize God's love for us. In an act of great mercy, God often answers our prayer and touches us physically. Sometimes he heals the blind, the deaf, and the lame. And sometimes he does not. But we are always to pray for one another and to ask for God's healing. It is a part of expressing God's love.

A couple of nights ago, some of us showed up in the home of Tony Vance. Tony will soon undergo open heart surgery. We gathered in his home and prayed for him. It is his and Mary's testimony that our coming and our prayers were tremendously helpful and supportive to them. We are expecting Tony to go through this surgery and to come out with flying colors. It is my prayer that his healing will be so rapid that doctors will be surprised. We are expecting Tony to be playing on the ball field this spring and to be joining us on our mission trip to the D.R. this summer.

You see, God answers in many, many ways. Sometimes God heals us and no further medical intervention is necessary. Sometimes God guides the hands of the surgeon and uses his expertise to heal us. Sometimes God simply strengthens us for the long journey ahead. And sometimes God says, "No, you are not to be healed at this time, but my strength is sufficient for you."

And, as long as God is glorified, it doesn't matter how He answers. It is always for our best benefit in the long run. That's where my faith is. I don't know how God will answer my prayers. I always ask that God's will be done, that the best thing be done for the person for whom I am praying, that God will be with you, and will heal you in ways beyond our imagination. It's always my hope that God will reveal His love and His mercy to you and draw you closer to Him than ever before.

With that understanding, I am going to invite you to come forward at the close of this service for healing prayer. I don't always do this, but when the Scripture text lends itself to this kind of invitation, it is my honor to do so. A couple of lay people will be joining me. We will simply ask you what you would like God to do for you. We will lay our hands upon you and bring your needs before the Lord.

Sometimes people need physical healing, sometimes we need spiritual healing, sometimes we need emotional healing, and sometimes we need healing in our relationships. Whatever your need is this morning, you are invited to come forward for prayer as you feel led by the Spirit.

Let's sing our final hymn and you may come as we sing or as people are leaving the sanctuary. Instead of leaving, you may come forward for prayer. Let me say that I believe that our greatest need is to experience God's forgiveness of sins as we turn to the Lord and receive Him into our lives in a moment of decision to follow the Lord. If you are ready to make that decision, then join others as they come and let us pray for you.

Let's pray: "God our heavenly Father, only you know what we are going through. Come O Holy Spirit and minister to those in need this morning. For Jesus sake – for eternity's sake we pray. Amen.