

Sermon – 05/12/2010 am

Jesus Rebukes Sickness and Demons

Study Text: Luke 4:38-44

‘This Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ said Jesus as he preached at Nazareth. ‘The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand’ he preached as he moved around in Palestine. Jesus moved around preaching the kingdom of God and healing all kinds of sickness and disease. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ of God. Jesus is the Son of God and ruler of a new kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Jesus demonstrated his authority and power over men when he walked away from the violent Jews at Nazareth. He demonstrated his authority and power over spiritual enemies when he cast demons out of a man. He demonstrated his authority and power over sickness and disease when he healed Peter’s mother-in-law, and many others at Capernaum. Jesus felt sorry for the people who were sick. He healed them out of compassion, and as a sign that the kingdom of God was at hand.

1. Sickness and Disease

Why do we get sick? Why do we suffer pain? Why do we die? These are big questions. People have pondered them down through the ages. People from different religious and philosophical backgrounds have exercised their brains on this matter but what is the answer. It may seem bold to offer a one word answer but that is what we get from the Bible. That word is ‘sin’.

In heaven there will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying or pain (Revelation 21:4). Why? Because there is no sin in heaven! There is nothing that defiles (Revelation 21:27). Heaven is a holy place where Jesus rules unopposed. Death came into the world because of sin. Pain and sorrow came because of sin.

Some scientists may object saying disease is caused by viruses and bacteria. This is true of course but where did these pathogens come from? Did they just happen? That is the best answer the world can give, but the Bible gives us a better answer, an answer that is true and fills us with hope. Whilst we are thankful for the work of scientists, science in itself will always come up short. People are dying of sickness and disease today just as they have done since sin entered the world.

Around 2000 years ago a woman living in Palestine was sick with fever. The woman was the mother-in-law of Simon Peter. Simon was known to Jesus. They had met by the lake of Galilee and Peter became a follower of Jesus. He probably heard Jesus preaching in the synagogue in Capernaum that very day. It was after leaving the synagogue that Jesus went to Simon’s house (4:38).

Peter’s wife is not mentioned but she was probably present if her mother was so sick. It is clear from this passage and others that Peter was a married man, contrary to the teaching of the Church of Rome. This visit and healing is also recorded by Matthew and Mark. They tell of the woman’s fever but Luke calls it a ‘high fever’, a diagnosis in keeping with Luke being a doctor.

When Jesus came to Simon’s house they told him about this sick woman. *They asked Jesus concerning her* (4:38). They may have seen or heard of Jesus healing other sick people, although this is the first healing recorded in this gospel, and in Mark. In any case, they had seen Jesus cast out demons. They asked Jesus to perform a miracle. It was a request not a demand.

Jesus approached the woman and stood over her. He *rebuked the fever and it left her* (4:39). Could this healing have been described any more simply or clearly? In other cases Jesus put his hands on people, as in the following verse, but this is not stated here. In other cases he looked for faith. In the case of the paralytic he did the strange thing of declaring the sick man's sins forgiven.

Jesus had no formula for healing. He saw the sickness but he also saw the person who was sick. He saw into their heart. He desired to heal body and soul. He had the authority and power to do both.

Jesus rebuked the demon (4:35). Now he rebukes the fever (4:39). The word is the same. What are we to understand from this? The demon was an unclean or evil spirit. He had no place residing in the man who was made in the image of God. His presence reminded Jesus that this is a fallen, sinful world.

This fever was also a reminder that this is a sinful world. When sin entered the world death spread to all people (Romans 5:12). The fever may have led to the death of this woman. Jesus rebuked the fever because it was a mark of the Fall and of the power of Satan. Jesus had authority over Satan and the demons.

Is it only sinners who get sick? Yes and no! Yes because all who are descended from Adam and Eve are sinners. No, because there is no mathematical equation which says sick people are guilty of unconfessed sin. There is a whole book in the Bible that refutes this mathematical connection. Job got terribly sick. Why? He rightly examined his life but found no unconfessed sin. The reason he got sick was because Satan was attacking him – with God's permission. Job was healed when God's purpose for his sickness was fulfilled.

What would Jesus have done if he came to Job's house? He would not have done what Job's friends did. Would Jesus have rebuked Job's fever as he did the fever of Peter's mother-in-law? In a sense this is what the Lord did -in his time. He restored Job. He delivered him from the evil attacks of Satan.

Our bodies are wonderful in the way that they fight against disease. We usually recover from a fever. We may use medicine to help our body recover. But it normally takes us a few days to get back on our feet. Notice that when Jesus healed this woman that she was up and about immediately (4:39). One moment she had fever and the next she was up serving the visitors. A mark of Jesus' healing was immediate restoration to full health. The paralytic was not sent off for rehabilitation. He was restored completely and immediately at the word of Jesus. Note that Jesus did not only heal bad backs, or aches and pains.

News of Jesus' healing this woman must have spread like the news of his casting out of the demon. When the Sabbath ended at sunset people came from all directions with those who were sick with all kinds of diseases (4:40). The Jews had very specific laws about what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. Jesus graciously laid his hands on every one brought to him and healed them (4:40). None were turned away. This does not mean he healed every sick person in Palestine, but he healed all who came to him.

Jesus is still ready and able to heal those who come to him. He can heal any and every sickness and disease. But his greatest desire is to heal your soul. He is ready and able to do that which no medical doctor can do. Jesus has the power to set men and women free from sin and death.

A girl once told me that she attended a healing service at her church and her arm was healed. I asked her what she was doing in response if the Lord had really healed her. She came to believe in

Jesus Christ not only as a healer but as her Saviour. She believed in Jesus who forgives our sin and saves our soul.

2. Silence

Among those flocking to Jesus after the Sabbath were more people suffering from demon possession. As with the man in the synagogue, the resident demons used the person as a mouthpiece to cry out in fear before Jesus. *You are the Son of God* they said (4:41). The demons knew Jesus was the Christ, the anointed One whom God sent into the world to destroy the rule of Satan and establish the kingdom of God.

Jesus again rebuked the demons, ordering them to be silent. They spoke the truth about Jesus but they had no personal faith. Jesus was not taken in by mere words. He knew the words were those of demons and he refused to let them speak further.

Jesus knows when words are coming from the heart and not just the lips. It is not enough for a person to say 'I believe there is a God'. Such words may get you labelled a Christian in earthly books, but not in the Book of Life. You must *confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead* to be saved (Romans 10:9).

Jesus did not want the endorsement of the devil or any of his agents. He would minister in the power of God and his power alone. In the church we must be discerning when it comes to associating with others in any ministry. Pagans may seek the support of the church in some worthy cause, and they will denounce the church if it does not join them. But let us beware. Let us learn from the example of Jesus.

What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness and what communion has light with darkness? Or what accord does Christ have with Belial? (II Corinthians 6:14). Christ had no accord with Satan; full stop. There were no ifs or buts. The end did not justify the means for Jesus. He had nothing to do with Satan or demons.

3. Solitude

Jesus must have been exhausted after such a busy day – physically and spiritually exhausted. But what do we see him doing the next day? At the crack of dawn he was up and off to a deserted or solitary place (4:42). He wanted to be alone to commune with his Father in heaven. 'Holy and sinless as his human nature was, it was a nature kept sinless in the regular use of the means of grace and not in the neglect of them' writes JC Ryle.

Can you imagine Jesus saying he was too busy or too tired to attend the house of God when it was open for worship! Can you imagine Jesus being too busy to spend time each day in prayer to his Father in heaven! The busier we are the more time we need to spend in prayer. Is that how it is in your life? We always find time to do all the important things like work, cleaning, shopping, study, traveling, spending time with friends, but struggle to find time for our Father in heaven. Is it any wonder that we get stressed and start to lose our way?

Jesus' solitude was broken by the sudden arrival of a crowd (4:42). They tried to keep him from leaving them. What a contrast to the crowd at Nazareth who threw Jesus out of their town. The people at Capernaum begged Jesus to stay.

Jesus could not stay because, as he told them, *I must preach the kingdom of God to other towns also because that is the reason I was sent* (4:43). The Father sent Jesus into this world to preach the

kingdom of God. Jesus sent the twelve out to preach the kingdom of God (9:2). He sent seventy others out to preach the kingdom of God (10:9). The apostle Paul was sent out to preach the kingdom of God. *How shall they hear without a preacher* (Romans 10:14).

God sent his only begotten Son into this world to be a preacher. The world despises preachers, and even some Christians think the day of preaching is past. But preaching is the way God has ordained for making known the kingdom of God. To quote Ryle again, 'the days when there has been little or no preaching have been days when there has been little or no good done in the church'. *How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things* (Romans 10:15).

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