

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Eighth Sunday after Trinity, July 21, 2013**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 66, 37, 284, 512, 345:4-5.

Lessons: Isaiah 35:1-10, Acts 4:23-37, Luke 4:14-30.

Sermon Text: Matthew 11:1-6.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One bible scholar has counted 33 specific miracles Jesus performed while on earth. But John, at the end of his gospel, tells us "*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" (John 20:30-31)

As we look at the kinds of miracles Jesus did while he lived on earth, we find that many of the physical diseases and illnesses that Jesus healed remind us of the unmistakable fact that Jesus heals mankind spiritually.

**JESUS HEALS**

- 1. John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to realize he was the promised Messiah.**
- 2. Yes, Jesus healed physical diseases, but he also**
- 3. Heals mankind from sin and death**
- 4. And prepares us for heaven, through the preaching of the Gospel.**

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus Christ throughout his ministry and had no doubts concerning Christ and his mission. When John had pointed out Jesus to his disciples the first time recorded in Scripture, two of those who heard him speak followed Jesus. One of these was Andrew, and we believe the other was John. By the time of our sermon text John the Baptist had been imprisoned, and you will remember that he was finally beheaded by Herod.

In our sermon text, John's disciples are sent to Jesus to verify for themselves, because John already knew and believed, that Jesus was the Messiah, the one who should come to save all mankind. He died for the sins of all mankind, but one receives the benefit of eternal life only if he or she comes to believe in him. "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16:16) John was convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Coming One. But he wanted to renew the faith of his disciples and so sent them to Jesus to be strengthened.

John had not come to earth to draw disciples and the people to himself, but to prepare the way for Christ and to lead men to Christ, making them subject to him. He sent them so that they might learn, not only from his testimony, but from Christ's words and works themselves, that Jesus Christ was the correct man of whom John had spoken.

In Luke we find a parallel account of our sermon text. "*At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.'*" (Luke 7:21-23)

John's disciples came to Jesus at a particularly good time. Just then Jesus was busy performing miracles of all kinds: He cured many people of diseases and sicknesses. He healed some of evil spirits. To many that were blind he gave sight.

Note how Jesus reassured John and his disciples. He did not just say, "Yes, I am the promised Messiah." He pointed instead to his mighty works. Giving sight to the blind, enabling the lame to walk, curing lepers, making the deaf hear, and even raising the dead—these were not only mighty works that demonstrated Jesus' divine power. They were also the very works that Isaiah the prophet had foretold of the Messiah. We read from our Old Testament lesson: ***"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."*** (Isaiah 35:5-6) In Isaiah 61:1 we read: ***"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."***

So you see that Isaiah had also promised that the poor in spirit would be evangelized. Jesus had opened his most famous sermon – the one we call ‘the sermon on the mount’ – by declaring, ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"*** (Matthew 5:3). Jesus described the same people when he said, ***"Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."*** (Matthew 11:6) In our Gospel lesson you heard of the things which Jesus did, and how people in his home town rejected him for those very reasons.

As these men returned to John in prison, John could take comfort in the blessings in store for anyone who would remain faithful unto death—the crown of everlasting life! With that goal before his eyes, John would be able to persevere.

The kinds of miracles that Jesus was doing actually and literally were pictures of the spiritual healing that Jesus brings.

The blind receive sight. Many people feel that to become blind would be one of the greatest hardships, worse than other illnesses or ailments. You can't make yourself see when you are blind. Scripture says that blind people were healed by God. You can't heal yourself of blindness, or of any other diseases and troubles named here.

We may make a comparison to spiritual blindness. Think of words of the song of praise “I was blind and now I see.” Every human is by nature spiritually blind and cannot see God's goodness in Jesus Christ. Jesus coming into someone's heart is the picture of the blind having the eyes of their understanding opened. We remember Paul's words in Ephesians 1:17-19: ***"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength."***

The second thing mentioned is that the lame walk. Today we can see many ways in which people who cannot walk get around to some degree, perhaps most notably the wheelchair. But historians suggest that something like a modern wheelchair has only been around for about 400 years. In Christ's day there was very little help for “the lame”, the crippled. And there would have been very few level, smooth places they could have attempted to walk. But Jesus healed many such who could not walk.

We turn back to Isaiah 2:3 for the spiritual application of Jesus healing those who can't walk. The important thing is to be able to walk in the paths that God teaches us: ***"Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."*** The goal is that, through the Word of the Lord, we may be healed and strengthened to walk as God would lead us, as we read in Hebrews 12:12-13: ***"Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 'Make level paths for your feet,' so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."*** Lord, may we – and all people! – walk in your paths, following your ways!

Then we read that ***"those who have leprosy are cured."*** Leprosy was an especially dreaded disease throughout the Old Testament, in Jesus day, and until recently. Many variations of leprosy are discussed in the scriptures, but all were such as to make one “unclean” according to the laws given by God through Moses. The worst leprosy was that which eats away at the flesh, fingers, toes, nose, eventually causing death. The least of the descriptions of leprosy describe horrible skin diseases. If anyone should be cured of any kind of leprosy,

God's laws prescribed certain actions, including seeing the priests to verify that the disease was truly cured, as we read in Leviticus 14.

This, of course, pictures the leprosy of sin. Leprosy was a systemic disease, and affected the whole body. Sin is systemic, and affects the whole person, soul, body, mind. Without Christ we are totally consumed by sin, and have no way to escape eternal damnation. With Christ, we have healing for all our sins, and can walk in the way of the Lord. With faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the gift of eternal life instead of eternal damnation.

When Jesus heals, those infected with the uncleanness of sin and every spiritual evil have and feel the healing power of the Gospel. We find this kind of healing spoken of frequently in the Scriptures, but 1 John 1:5-10 is especially graphic and informative: ***"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."***

Jesus also healed deafness. Mankind can't and doesn't hear the truth without God. In explaining the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus gives an excellent picture of being healed of deafness and blindness and hearing God's truths, the gospel of salvation: ***"The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?' He replied, 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."*** (Matthew 13:10-17)

Matthew also tells us that the dead were raised. This is the ultimate healing. We are convinced that on the Last Day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true. That is the picture from Ephesians 2:1 and 4. ***"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins .... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved."***

And all this healing is summarized in the last words: ***"and the good news is preached to the poor."*** Right there is the key to the most important thing that Jesus did. He fulfilled the gospel promises. He brought the good news of the forgiveness of sins through faith. That is the Gospel that is preached to you even today.

And how did all this happen? Through what Jesus did. Yes, he healed many of earthly diseases and illnesses, but more importantly, he healed all men of their sins. And if they will only believe they will truly receive everlasting life in heaven! Lord, make us messengers of your truth that many may be brought to your eternal healing! Amen.