

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sexagesima Sunday, January 31, 2016

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

Hymns: 1, 9:1, 19, 144, 47.

Lessons: Psalm 41, Acts 3:1-16, Matthew 12:1-13.

Sermon Text: Mark 1:29-39

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last week you heard that Jesus cast out a demon. That is plainly a picture of Jesus' rescuing mankind from the power of the devil.

Our text today shows that Jesus also healed all sorts of diseases while he was on earth. On this Sabbath day he had healed a demon-possessed man and later he healed a woman of a fever and *“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.”*

Today we are reminded that

JESUS CONTINUES TO HEAL

- 1. He healed during his life on earth.**
- 2. He rests after a busy day by praying.**
- 3. His healing continues today.**

“As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.” You heard last week how Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum impressed people with his message and he cast out an evil spirit showing his power. After his work in the synagogue they went to Simon Peter's house.

Here we see again how every word of Holy Scripture is important. We have mention of a woman who was sick with a fever. But note who she was! This was the mother-in-law of Simon Peter, whom the Roman Catholic Church claims was the first Pope. We can easily wonder how it is that the largest Christian church in the world can then forbid its priests to marry when the man they claim as their first pope was married!

We find here a reminder that we, too, who claim to teach and believe that all of the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God must examine Scripture carefully and teach only what the Scriptures teach, nothing more, nothing less.

Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law of her fever and then we read that *“The fever left her and she began to wait on them.”*

Then we hear *“That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.”* The people waited until the Sabbath was past, for the day technically came to an end with the setting of the sun. The people were so law-bound that they waited until sunset, when the Sabbath was over – lest they might be admonished and punished for breaking any of the man-made laws added to the Third Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.”

We find several examples in Scripture where Jesus was rebuked by the Pharisees for working and healing on the Sabbath Day. Many teachers of the law and Pharisees added man's laws to the commandments, pretending they came from God.

“One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the

Sabbath?'" (Mark 2:23-24 NIV) They were accusing Jesus' disciples of working on the Sabbath day – of harvesting grain!

On another occasion, after Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath we read: ***"Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."*** (Mark 3:6 NIV) Yet the Pharisees were strangely silent in the Gospels when Jesus asked them about healing on the Sabbath day. Their man-made rules tripped them up.

So much for the people who were so bound by the laws of men which were added to the Third Commandment about the Sabbath being a day of rest. But we must remember that Jesus is the true Sabbath, for Sabbath means rest. He came to give us true rest and peace for our souls in the forgiveness of sins.

"That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door." Many people wanted to take advantage of this miracle worker. And Jesus obliges them. ***"Jesus healed many who had various diseases."*** Jesus can do anything. He can heal any disease.

So quickly had his fame spread that ***"The whole town gathered at the door"*** of the house where he was staying. And they were not disappointed in their trust. No matter what the disease was – and many different forms of sickness were represented in that great multitude – he healed them. And he cast out many demons.

Mark also records ***"He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was."*** Jesus healed the demon-possessed. But Jesus would not let the demons speak because Satan was not a proper witness because those hearing him could say, 'Those are the words of the father of lies. How can we believe them?'

Christ did not permit the demons to speak, lest they tell the people the truth concerning him. The Lord desires no testimony from the devil and from all those that are willingly in Satan's service. He wanted to reveal himself to the people of Galilee in his own way and at his own time.

Even today, with all our advanced medicine, we do not have complete mastery over illness and disease. When illness does not respond when the medical community is treating the disease, people are often baffled as to what to do next.

But we are assured again today that Christ is stronger than all powers of destruction; and when he rose from the grave that fact assures us that he has full control even over death.

It is interesting that there is no mention right here of Jesus preaching the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins to the people he individually healed. But he is the omniscient Son of God. It would be easy for us to think that he talked about the forgiveness of sins. It is hard to imagine the loving Son of God simply healing people one after another, like a mechanical hand coming down on people's heads, one after another. (raise and lower your arm about 3 times as if touching people's heads)

Jesus had little chance for rest, once people knew about the power he had over disease and demons. After such a hard day of preaching and healing, Jesus surely would have been tired, even exhausted. Notice how he finds rest and relaxation.

"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."

Jesus recuperated by praying. It had been long after sundown, probably as long as twilight lasted, that Jesus had been busy with the sick people. And yet, before the dawn brightened the hills on the eastern shore of Lake Gennesaret, while it was yet night, he arose, left the house, and went out into a desert place. He had no doubt been tired the evening before. And he knew that the future would bring many such days, with excitement preaching and work for him from morning till night. He was ready for this work. That was part of his office, his official duties, for which he had come.

But his purpose in seeking a lonely place so early in the morning was to enter into communion with his heavenly Father by praying. We read in Hebrews: ***"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."*** (Hebrews 5:7 NIV)

He did this very early in the morning. He needed new strength for further labors and trials, and this he sought and received through prayer. There is no better way of maintaining the spiritual strength and serenity needed in difficult work for the Lord than by constant communication with the Lord in his Word and by prayer. Jesus was soon missed at the place he had been staying, and Peter and several others followed the way which they thought Jesus must have taken. The text implies an earnest, anxious seeking, for this is necessary at all times when Jesus is the object of the search. Having found the Master, they inform him that all the people were even then searching for him. To men and women anxious to hear words out of the mouth of Jesus and to see works of glory performed by him, the early hours of the morning are not too early. But at this time Jesus was not influenced by the message of Peter. He does not return to Capernaum at this time. He wanted to go to other places, and asked them to go along. He wanted to preach and to proclaim the Word of the Gospel elsewhere. The healing was a secondary consideration. It was intended merely to confirm the Word which Jesus spoke.

From this text, we must be assured that Jesus is capable of healing yet today.

But what is the greatest healing that Jesus can give? It is the forgiveness of sins. Do we always realize what a precious gift that is? Sin – and especially those sins that eat at us and trouble us – is like a cancer or a flesh-eating bacteria – eating away at us and troubling us. We can be told that our sins are forgiven but Satan has a way of coming back at us and pestering us with these kinds of questions: ‘Are you sure your sins are forgiven?’ ‘Are you sure you are sorry for your sins?’ ‘Wasn’t it great fun while you were doing it?’ ‘How can God forgive you?’ Yes, doesn’t Satan have ways of making us doubt the forgiveness of sins?

But be assured that just as Jesus healed the physical ailments, pains, and diseases, so he can and does heal the emotional and spiritual hurts we have inflicted on ourselves as well as the hurts that the world inflicts on us.

We have the forgiveness of sins now, in this life – in Word and Sacrament. We can regularly and often be assured of that. In each of our Sunday worship services you can hear the words of forgiveness Jesus earned for you. In the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper Jesus gave bread and wine to his disciples “saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.’”

But what about Jesus healing our physical pains, illnesses, injuries and diseases? He can do it, just as he did in the New Testament. We may wonder why he doesn’t heal us of all our physical diseases. We just don’t know for sure. But we must remember that all things are in his hands at all times. We can certainly pray in faith and we sometimes hear even today of miraculous healing of this or that disease or ailment. Surely a believer can see the hand of God in such things. Yet we always pray, especially when it comes to earthly concerns “Thy will be done”. For example, remember that Saint Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was not taken away though he prayed earnestly for it to be removed, but he conceded that God’s ***“grace is sufficient”*** and admitted ***“my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*** (2 Corinthians 12:9 KJV)

So just as Jesus resorted to prayer for rest and recreation, for recovery and strength, so we too must turn to God in prayer. Yet when we pray, what is usually uppermost in our minds? Earthly concerns! But remember that six of the seven petitions in the model prayer Jesus taught us are asking for spiritual blessings. So may we see in Jesus the example of abundant healing, an assurance that he can heal and solve anything that confronts us! Amen.