

2/15/09

**THE GOSPEL LESSON**

Mark 1:40-45 (*Jesus cures a leper.*)

**40** A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

**41** Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

**42** Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

**43** Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:

**44** "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

**45** Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

**THE SERMON** "Cure or Healing – Facing Horrible Diseases with Jesus'  
Mark 1

INTO - On January 26 I went fishing. Not a surprise, I know. I took with me a pastor fishing who has not been ice fishing. Now, I go fishing to get out doors, to enjoy some fresh air and some sunshine, to enjoy God's creation. I believe it is healthy and enjoyable. But, I also go hoping to get some fish.

This one Monday I was hoping for a nice day. It was nice. The sun was shining and it was above zero a perfect day to be outside. I was hoping that we might catch some fish. That always makes it interesting, especially for novices. And we caught fish. In fact, the other pastor and I both caught trout that were bigger than the biggest trout I have ever caught. Let me put that another way. I've been fishing for trout since I was 3 years old. I am now 55. On that one day we caught the two biggest rainbows I've ever caught.

Now, I didn't keep that to myself. In fact, I shared te pictures, though that might be understating the fact. My wife says I assault people with my fish pictures. I hope you haven't been assaulted. But, I was, let's say, enthusiastic in sharing my good news. After all, I had some hopes for a good trip, and my hopes were not only met, but greatly exceeded.

Today, I want us to leave here enthusiastically sharing the good news that God's love exceeds even our high hopes.

I. It should be noted that leprosy in Jesus day can perhaps be compared to cancer or another horrible illness today.

- A. Without going into lots of detail about leprosy, you should know that it was a skin disease, or series of skin diseases, that had a horrible affect on the lives of the victims.
  - 1. People were considered unclean, not only ceremonially for worship, but also physically, if they had leprosy.
  - 2. They were forced to stay away from other people who did not have the disease. Often living outside the town.
  - 3. So, people with this communicable disease spread the disease to one another, separated from home, family, and worship.
- B. We know of people in the Bible who were healed of leprosy,.
  - 1. For example, we are told of Namaan in our Old Testament Lesson today.
  - 2. The Old Testament had regulations that when someone seemed to be healed, and this did happen, they had to show themselves to the priest before being allowed back into society.
- C. Please notice what the man asked for. **"If you are willing, you can make me clean."**
  - 1. He did not just ask for healing. Actually in Greek, that is another word.
  - 2. This man asked for cleansing. This could include healing. But, cleansing also had a ceremonial implication, a worship implication, even spiritual implications.
  - 3. The man asked and Jesus responded.
  - 4. In fact, Jesus responded in so wonderful a way that the man not only witnessed to the priests. He did what he was told not to do, he spread the word everywhere so that Jesus could no longer enter the towns because of the commotion he made and the attention he got.
  - 5. To put a positive face on this you can say the man had hopes, and Jesus far exceeded those hopes. The man shared His good news enthusiastically. I understand that.

II. There is a danger in this lesson.

- A. The man tells Jesus, **"If you are willing, you can make me clean."** Jesus replies, **"I am willing, Be clean!"** and the man is healed.
- B. Do you see the possible misunderstanding?
  - 1. Today, many want to be healed, but it doesn't always happen. Some think, "Maybe

I don't ask in the right way. Maybe Jesus doesn't WANT to heal me. What did I do wrong. THAT IS **NOT** what Jesus is telling us in this lesson.

2. In reality more people are healed than we often realize.
  - A. Have you had a cold, or the flu recently, or maybe even surgery? We have people in worship today who were in the hospital this past week and they are on their way to recovery. God did have his hand in that. Whenever our bodies are healed, or the doctors and medicine work to heal our bodies, they only use the natural ability and inclination that God put into our bodies to heal themselves. Look at the cuts you have.
  - B. In addition, there are people in our midst that we did not know would get better, and they have. Rich Kelpé was one of those. Paula Dobbs. Bill Allen was once told his cancer was terminal. Others like Henry Kolberg and Michelle Pasier are people who had a bad diagnosis that is no longer there. My friends, God had his hand in this too.
3. But, you and I both know that not everyone experiences physical healing.
  - A. Read 2 Corinthians 12. Paul prayed 3 times for healing from his thorn in the flesh, and God said, "No, my grace is sufficient for you."
  - B. Since being healed from heart and cancer problems, Rich Kelpé and Henry Kolberg have nevertheless been called home to the Lord.
- C. We have many at St. John, in our community, in our families who are ill.
  1. People have heart problems, diabetes, cancer.
  2. Many pray for physical healing. Some are physically healed, and some are not.
  3. You need to know that God is not ignoring the prayers of those that do not receive physical healing. It is NOT THAT God is unwilling.

III. When we go in faith to Jesus with problems, hurts, and illnesses, large and small, he gives answers that far exceeds what we ask.

- A. When we go to Jesus with any illness or problem, He always offers cleansing.
  1. Jesus came not just to heal from physical problems, but to save from sin, for eternal life.
  2. Jesus died on the cross for our sin and rose so that He could overcome the cause of our illness, our pain, our suffering.
  3. In Jesus, if we find physical healing God offers more than just that physical healing for a short period of time until God calls us home.
  4. In Jesus, God cleanses us from our sin. He provides forgiveness, and victory, and hope in this life, and an eternal future in heaven.
- B. You see, God not only takes care of our physical and temporary problems at times. HE HAS TAKEN CARE OF THE CAUSE OF THOSE PROBLEMS ETERNALLY.
  1. We have received more than we ask for, in Jesus.
  2. We have reason to enthusiastically share the love of Jesus with others.

CONCLUSION - Recently I have been making many visits on those who are ill. Two especially have struck me in knowing God's love in the mist of difficulty. I want to share one with you.

In September I was at a meeting in Portland, and while flying through Seattle I rented a plane and went to see both Dave Miranda and Joel Stefanski. When I went to see Joel in the hospital I read to Him Psalm 46:1. "**God is our refuge and strength, an every present help in trouble.**" I shared with Joel how God has not left us in times of trouble, but even more is a help, a present help, and ever present help. Joel wanted to disagree though. He said, "Pastor Rockey, I'm not sure I can call this (his broken hip, his severed arteries, his internal injuries that are still not healed) trouble. Because God has given me so many blessings, and so much love from this injury, I'm not sure I can call it trouble. Even when healing had not happened, Joel saw the hand of God working in bigger

ways, and enthusiastically shared it with a person just looking at the obvious, like me.

We may be in trouble, or difficulty. I can tell you that even in answering our prayers God may not always give us what we ask for, but He is giving us more than we ask for through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

Will you enthusiastically tell others what Jesus has done, and is doing for you?

### **THE PSALM AND THE CALL TO WORSHIP**

### **Psalm 84**

Lay Minister: 1 How lovely is your **dwelling** place, O LORD Almighty!

**People: 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.**

Lay Minister: 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.

**People: 4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.**

Lay Minister: 5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.

**People: 6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.**

Lay Minister: 7 They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

**People: 8 Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob.**

Lay Minister: 9 Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one.

**People: 10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.**

Lay Minister: 11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

**People: 12 O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.**

Lay Minister: We begin our worship in the name of the Lord, our sun and shield, who bestows favor and honor.

**People: In the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Merciful Father, as Your Son, Jesus, reached out to embrace people with the healing power of Your love, we ask that through us, You will also embrace all those You love, offering them the health of body, mind, and spirit that You alone can give; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

### **THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

2 Kings 5:1-14 (*Naaman is cured of leprosy.*)

1 Now Naaman was commander of the Syrian Army. 2 Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." 4 Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. 5 "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. 6 The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

7 As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

8 When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." 11 But Naaman went away angry and said, "I

thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

13 Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" 14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

**THE EPISTLE LESSON** 1 Corinthians 10:19 ---11:1

*(A Christian lives their life doing all to the glory of God.)*

19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? 23 "Everything is permissible"-- but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"-- but not everything is constructive. 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. 25 Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26 for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." 27 If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake-- 29 the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? 30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?

31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.