**Jesus heals Peter’s relative and many others**  26/2/23 dkm

Read: Mark 1,

Text: Mark 1:29-39

Psalms: 111, 23old, 18:1-6, 117

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’. Death came into the world because of sin. Pain and sorrow came because of sin: ‘In pain you shall bring forth children’ (Gen 3:18). In heaven there will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying or pain (Rev 21:4). Why? Because there is no sin in heaven! There is nothing that defiles (Rev 21:27). Heaven is a holy place where Jesus rules unopposed.

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.

When Jesus, the Son of God, began his ministry he said, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel’ (1:15). And then Jesus went about healing people, casting out demons, and preaching the kingdom of God. He healed people out of compassion, but also as a sign that he was the Messiah and the King of the kingdom of God. He demonstrated his authority and power over sickness and disease when he healed Peter’s mother-in-law, and many others at Capernaum. Our subheadings are: sick woman healed, silence to demons, solitude to pray, seeking the lost.

**1. Sick woman healed**

Around two thousand years ago a woman living in Israel 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 went with Jesus to the synagogue in Capernaum that very day, where he heard Jesus preaching and saw him cast demons out of man. It was after leaving the synagogue that Jesus, along with Peter and Andrew, and James and John, went to Simon’s house (1:29). Peter’s wife is not mentioned but she was probably present if her mother was so sick. It is clear from this passage, and other passages (e.g. 2Cor 9:5), 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 Luke. They all tell of the woman’s fever; Luke calls it a ‘high fever’, a diagnosis in keeping with Luke being a doctor (Luke 4:38).

When Jesus came to Simon’s house they told him about this sick woman at once (1:30). They may have seen or heard of Jesus healing other sick people, although this is the first healing recorded in this gospel, and in Luke. In any case, they had seen Jesus cast out demons. They asked Jesus to perform a miracle; remember it was a ‘high fever’, according to Luke. It was a request not a demand. Jesus came to the woman, probably in another room of the house. He took her by the hand and lifted her up, something I suppose anyone could have done. But as he lifted her up the fever immediately left her (1:31); Luke says, ‘He …rebuked the fever and it left her’ (Luke 4:39).

Could this healing have been described any more simply or clearly? Jesus often touched the sick while healing them, but not always. In many cases Jesus asked for an expression of faith, but sometimes somehow saw faith. In the case of the paralytic, he did the strange thing of declaring the sick man’s sins forgiven (2:5). 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; now he rebukes a fever (Luke 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 woman’s fever was also a reminder that this is a sinful world. When sin entered the world, and death through sin, death spread to all people (Rom 5:12). The fever could 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 God 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 she was up and about immediately, serving the people in her house (1:31). One moment she had fever and the next she was up serving. A mark of Jesus’ healing was immediate restoration to full health. This woman was not told to take it easy for a few days till she was fully recovered. The paralytic was not sent off for rehabilitation. At the word of Jesus he was restored completely and immediately. Note also 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 to the house from all directions bringing people who were sick or demon-possessed (1:32); ‘the whole city was gathered at the door (1:33). The Jews had very specific laws about what could and could not be done on the Sabbath, and about how far people to travel on the Sabbath. Jesus graciously laid his hands the sick and ‘healed many’ (1:34); he healed everyone brought to him, according to Luke (Luke 4:40). None were turned away. This does not mean he healed every sick person in the land, 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 student 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 to demons**

Among those flocking to Jesus after that Sabbath in Capernaum were more people suffering from demon possession. As with the man in the synagogue, the body-possessing demons used the person’s vocal cords and mouth to cry out in fear before Jesus, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God’ (Luke 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 (1:34). 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’ in order to be saved (Rom 10:9).

Jesus did not want any endorsement from the devil or his agents. He would minister in the power of God and this power alone. In the church we must be discerning when it comes to associating with others, especially unbelievers, in some ministry. Let us learn from the example of Jesus, and the teaching of Paul: ‘What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness, and what communion has light with darkness? Or what accord does Christ have with Belial?’ (2Cor 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 to pray**

At the crack of dawn the next day, Jesus was up and off to a deserted or solitary place to pray (1:35); only Mark tells us that he went to this deserted place for the purpose of prayer. Jesus must have been physically and spiritually exhausted after such a busy day. But still he was up before daylight to pray, to commune with his Father in heaven. He needed a quiet place to do this, so he left the house for a deserted place. I am blessed to now have a quiet room in which to pray, but remember going off to the woods when we had young children.

Can you imagine Jesus being too tired or too busy to spend time each day in prayer to his Father in heaven! Can you imagine Jesus saying he was too busy or too tired to attend the house of God when it was open for worship! 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 ‘important’ things like work, shopping, study, traveling, spending time with friends, yet struggle to find time to spend with our Father in heaven. Is it any wonder that we get stressed, and start to lose our way in life?

It seems that a crowd was still gathered at the door of the house, or maybe it was a new crowd. Mark tells us that Simon and the others, presumably Andrew, James and John, went searching for Jesus on behalf of the people (1:36); Luke simply has the crowd searching for him (Luke 4:42). Jesus’ solitude came to an abrupt end when Peter and the others found him and told him, ‘Everyone is looking for you’ (1:37). And what did Jesus say in reply? They expected Jesus to come and enjoy his popularity; they may have started taking pride in being the disciples of such a popular rabbi. But Jesus said it was time to move on.

The people of Capernaum had heard his teaching and seen his mighty works. Other towns must also hear the gospel. Jesus said, ‘Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth’ (1:38). And so Jesus went off preaching in the synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons (1:39). The Father sent Jesus into this world to preach the kingdom of God. Jesus sent the Twelve out to preach the kingdom of God. He sent seventy others out to preach the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul was sent out to preach the kingdom of God: ‘How shall they hear without a preacher’ (Rom 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, '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’ (Rom 10:15).