

**The Physical Healing Ministry of Jesus**  
Mat 9:18-26, John 14:9-14, James 5: 13-16

Brothers and sisters in Christ, think about all the tasks that you would normally perform during the course of your day.

From the relatively simple ones like showering and bathing and grooming yourself, to the more complex tasks like driving, cooking, operating machinery, or whatever else you might need to do for your work.

Think about all that is involved in these tasks - how your body must function and process information and respond to it, and do so smoothly and competently, or else these tasks become very difficult and things can go very wrong.

So it's not too far off to say that life is challenging and difficult enough without having to deal with getting sick right?

Because when we get sick, our ability to function normally is interrupted and we simply can't do all the tasks that we normally would do.

So, sickness frustrates us, it stymies us; it prevents us from reaching our goals and objectives, from realizing our potential, from fulfilling our calling and purpose to steward and develop God's creation in our worship of Him.

And we all will have experienced this in some measure – from battling the usual colds and stomach flus, to contracting a more serious illness that requires us to be hospitalized, or living with the ongoing pain and discomfort of having to cope with some sort of medical condition like diabetes, or arthritis.

And we all fear the very real possibility of being diagnosed with a disease or a condition that would render us helpless and incapable of functioning as we are called to in our day to day life – however much of that life might be left.

And I bring this up for reflection friends, because as we start this next series on the Healing ministry of Jesus – we need to understand sickness, disease, and deformity from a spiritual perspective, or rather from a biblical perspective.

Not that a biological perspective on sickness isn't correct when it can diagnose how we get sick from bacteria or viruses, or how our body malfunctions and causes cancer and so on...

But the biological perspective only deals with the how – not the why – and if we insist that the biological explanation is the why, then we are inadvertently becoming biological determinists who believe there is nothing more to reality than the material.

But a biblical perspective on sickness and disease reveals a different why to us than biological determinism.

The scriptures reveal that we experience disease and deformity and sickness in this world because it is fallen. It is under a curse because of the covenant unfaithfulness of Adam and Eve.

God says to Adam, *“cursed is the ground because of you & and it will produce thorns and thistles for you”* (Gen 3:17) so in this curse we see the that relationship between humans and this

world is now antagonistic – and the study of biology certainly gives us far more insight on the specifics of how that antagonistic relationship produces sickness and disease for sure.

So we learn that the why is behind sickness and disease and deformity is the curse, the consequence of original Sin.

And we are all born into and under this curse - this is why we all get sick and why we all will eventually die – as God said to Adam *“for dust you are and to dust you will return.”* (Gen 3:19)

You see friends when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they crossed the line between being made in the image of God to declaring themselves be like God - but the fact is we are not like God.

We have no divinity to sustain our life – only the true God can do that and God allows this truth to be illuminated for us in a

very real way as we experience sickness and disease and eventually death – so that we might turn back to God for our source of healing and life.

That may seem to be a hard grace – but it is grace... and furthermore God’s sustaining and preserving Word by which ALL things have been made and continue to exist – in that preserving and sustaining grace brings about the gift of healing in creation – unbidden and unrequested.

The Curse disrupts the shalom of God’s creation, The devil works to amplify this curse and use its consequences to turn us from God, but the sustaining Word of God retrains the Curse and the devil, and continues to call the creation to respond in obedience to God’s created intention for it.

Isaiah 55:11 *“my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire”*

Yet the curse and the devil and our sin are still with us, so there is a current tension as God’s Word calls towards the

healing and restoration of the entire creation – and our sin and the curse and the devil stand in the way of that.

Thus Paul writes in Romans 8:20-23 *“For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”*

You see friends – the creating and sustaining and healing Word of God became flesh, the incarnate one – our Lord Jesus Christ who came to reverse the curse and restore shalom to the entire creation.

Paul explains in Romans 5:17 *“For if, by the trespass of the one man [Adam], death reigned through that one man, how much*

*more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!"*

So, brothers and sisters in Christ, knowing all this is crucial to properly understand Jesus healing ministry, and it's especially important as He calls us to continue that healing ministry.

Now the gospels are full of examples of Jesus healing people, and there are many situations where it simply says that the people *"brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them."* (Luke 4:40)

But whenever the specifics of a healing are recorded for us to read about – as they are in Matthew 9 – there is something in particular that is being highlighted for us to learn about.

So in Matthew 9:18-26 the details illustrate how Jesus' healing ministry is an expression and is tied into his overall

mission to reverse the Curse, redeem humanity as stewards of the Creation, and bring shalom to the creation.

Here we see the Word of God incarnate restoring life to one who has died, and restoring the ability to conceive and bring another life in the world, and participate uniquely as a woman in the task of multiplying and subduing the earth.

So friends what Matthew is saying to us in these details about Jesus' healing ministry is that in Jesus Christ we find the one who can overcome the penalty of sin which is death, and the one who restores us to who God created us to be.

And that restoration of our purpose to steward God's creation in worship of Him is emphasized by fact that under the Mosaic Law touching a dead body and touching a woman who was bleeding would make someone unclean.

That is they were not fit to participate in the service and the worship of God until they had done what was required to cleanse themselves.

Now being unclean was not the same as having sinned by violating one of the laws of the covenant, you could keep all the laws and still become unclean by touching something unclean.

And the distinction between clean and unclean in the Law of Moses was meant to teach God's people and us about the difference between our personal sin and our sinful nature.

Breaking the Ten Commandments or any of the other cultic, civil or purity laws of the covenant illustrates how we personally commit offenses and are each guilty of breaking God's covenant.

But the status of being clean or unclean gets at the deeper issue of how we are all born into and under the curse from Adam's sin – and unless we are cleansed from that we are unfit for worship and service to God.

That's why under the Law of Moses it was typically disease and sickness and things surrounding death which made one

unclean – because it ties back to how we are affected by the fall of this world into Sin and the consequential curse.

We tend to forget this – and we tend to only think about sin as being those instances when we lose our temper, cheat on our taxes, give into lust, get drunk – when we break one of the 10 commandments right?

But the Law of Moses helps us to see that not only do we need forgiveness from those specific violations that we personally commit – we also need to be cleansed from our sinful nature so that we might be of service to God and be able to worship Him as He originally intended us to.

But in Jesus Christ Matthew wants us to see someone who is willing to go and touch the dead in order to bring life, and... before he has the chance to do so, Jesus is touched by an unclean woman seeking healing – and Jesus assures her that her faith in who he is has brought that healing...

But Jesus is not made unclean by this touch – because Jesus is not affected by the fall into Sin. He is the Word of God incarnate, and He overcomes the curse, he does not succumb to it.

And to prove Jesus is still clean, still fit for God’s service, Matthew records how Jesus goes and brings the dead girl back to life.

Jesus as a human being in relationship with God is beyond the effects of the curse because His humanity was born of God through a virgin – and not born under the curse.

So, this is why we read Jesus’ words to Philip from John 14:10-11 where Jesus says *“it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.”*

Do you see how this is all working together friends? Jesus healing ministry is all part of the big picture and the big plan – and is recorded so that we may understand and believe.

Now – switch gears for a moment here.

Notice that when he is speaking to Philip Jesus does not call his healings miracles; rather he calls them “works”.

Now they may look miraculous to us, but for Jesus they are simply part and parcel of His overall mission and a regular part of his ministry that he goes about doing as the Word of God incarnate.

And this is important friends because Jesus continues on in verse 12 saying *“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”*

So brothers and sisters in Christ – our motivation to continue the healing ministry of Jesus needs to flow out of our understanding that as we are made clean in Jesus Christ – fit

to serve and worship God – that healing of sickness and disease is just normal part of everyday Christian ministry and reflects our Heavenly Father’s desire and plan of returning shalom to His creation.

And we should understand Jesus promise of doing “greater things than these” not as referring to greater in terms of accomplishment, and certainly not in terms of spectacle – Jesus pretty much did it all and we’re not going to outdo the Word of God made flesh - but we should understand it in terms of scope.

We who believe in Jesus are going to take his ministry to places it has never been before. This is why Jesus commissioned and empowered his disciples to go beyond Israel - to the ends of the earth – as his witnesses. (Acts 1:8)

So you can see why the longer ending of the gospel of Mark in 16:15-18 records Jesus speaking these words to the disciples – as it kind of summarizes much of what we’ve been talking about.

*“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”*

Now I can refer to this verse at this point - because you understand the whole background of Jesus healing ministry and how it ties into God’s overall plans to remove the curse from creation – and that is how we can make sense of handling snakes and drinking poison here.

So understanding Jesus’ healing ministry is important for us – but that’s because practicing it is an expected and anticipated part of what it means for us to be a part of the Body of Christ that continues Christ’s work.

And with this understanding we can take the instruction and advice given to us from James and begin to practice what it really means to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we may be healed. (James 5:16)

And the prayer of faith which James speaks about is prayer to Jesus Christ – the Word of God incarnate – asking for healing with the understanding that our sickness and disease reveal our need for His ultimate cleansing, being washed in His blood so that our Original sin is cleansed – and the effects of the curse may be reversed - and our physical healing in Jesus name is a sign of that to strengthen our faith.

Whether that healing comes instantly or over time, from the direct power of the Holy Spirit or through Holy Spirit's working in the creational wisdom of physicians and medicines.

And, our healing is given for freedom friends so that we might be given a physical sign of the spiritual reality that in Jesus Christ, the image of God in us has been restored - and we are

brought back to life, cleansed and set free to steward and develop God's creation to His glory!

And we are called to minister in this way to each other – going back to that New Year's message again about Type B growth – and being able to recognize the pain and talk about it right... and James is quite literal about that pain here this morning.

*“Are any of you sick?” He asks. “Then call for the elders of the church to come and pray for you and anoint you with oil in the name of Jesus.” (James 5:14)*

So I wonder friends – why is it that we go to the doctor first and then if that doesn't work we ask for prayer?

Perhaps – if we are being biblical, we should be asking our fellow Christians – especially those who are trained for prayer ministry, to pray for us for healing – and then go to the doctor.



Because we if we truly understand sickness and disease and healing and Jesus' healing ministry then it's not about getting healed by prayer instead of by doctors, it's about understanding why healing is necessary and receiving it from the Word Incarnate and the Word in Creation.

And this only deepens your relationship with God and helps you grow towards maturity - because you are seeing and receiving His healing grace applied to your whole person.

So friends – this morning I want to give us some time to respond to Jesus' physical healing ministry and seek Him in faith – as the synagogue leader and the hemorrhaging woman did.

We're going to move into a time of reflecting and meditating upon what we've learned about Jesus' healing ministry this morning and our prayer ministry team is going to be at the back of the sanctuary – and as the Holy Spirit leads you – I would encourage to ask them to pray for you for whatever physical healing needs you may have.

This is just doing the work that Jesus did friends – as we are His Body empowered by His Spirit.

Our Lord offers us healing brothers and sisters – let us confess our sin and receive it. Amen.