

Thirsting for Healing
Luke 4:38-41, Luke 5:12-15

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this morning I want to ask you... what sort of sick person are you? And no, I'm not asking you in the sense of wondering how you could be such a mean and cruel person?

What I mean is how do you handle being sick? How do you deal with it? What kind of person are you when you get sick during cold and flu season?

You see I stumbled across these little comics about different kinds of sick people which illustrates what I'm talking about - maybe you can identify with one of them, or they might remind you of someone you know.

First there's the Psychic sick person - as the cartoon says these people always manage to avoid any serious illness by taking adequate time off whenever their throat has the slightest tickle... and the author of the cartoon isn't sure if this is

because they are responsible adults who know how to take care of their bodies or if there is some dark power involved??

Next there's the Phoenix - this is the person who gets a minor sniffle and then retreats to their bed for no less than a week, while tissues and unanswered emails pile up around them. Then at the very last possible minute - just before getting fired - they miraculously arise fully restored full of energy and fiery passion... making everyone else who is battling the cold burn with jealousy.

And then there is the Zombie - that person who comes down with something and then never truly seems to recover for the rest of the cold season - and they keep on showing up moaning and complaining about how awful they feel looking drained and lifeless..

And last but not least - is the Soldier. No matter how sick you are you soldier on and refuse to give in and take a sick day - even if you look like death warmed over and if people ask how you are feeling you stoically reply "I'm fine!"

And some people take this to the extreme by refusing to take any medication... no Tylenol, no Neo-citran, not even any Buckley's or cough drops – they are just going to tough it out, as if they have some sort of personal vendetta to prove they don't need any help to manage things...

Now, I can relate somewhat to this resistance of admitting you are sick and in need of rest and not wanting to take some medicine to relieve your symptoms... maybe you can too – or you know someone who is like this.

Now we all know it's a bit foolish to be so stoic about being sick when it is so easy to get some medicine that can help us feel better and recover, and if we apply this insight to spiritual thirst we might say that it's a bit foolish to avoid or deny your spiritual thirst when it is so easy to turn to Jesus to have Him satisfy that thirst.

But – we still resist it... In fact brothers and sisters we seem to be pretty resistant to this whole notion of spiritual thirst and reflecting back on our own lives to determine what our

spiritual thirst was that the Holy Spirit used to help us turn to Jesus Christ and experience Him meeting that thirst.

As we have been looking at some of what qualifies as spiritual thirst over this past month and how that can function in people's lives I am getting the sense that we are resisting that a bit.

Now I have to admit that it is difficult to preach on spiritual thirst – it's far easier to simply pick a passage of scripture, study it and meditate on it and bring out the spiritual insights that are in it and offer some examples of how to apply that to your day to day life. So this has been a challenging series of messages to put together.

But I'm doing it because I believe what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our congregation with this focus on spiritual thirst is to use our awareness of it to rekindle that passion and excitement and enthusiasm that we once had in our relationship with Jesus when we realized how He satisfied our spiritual thirst...

So that – we are able to co-operate with what the Holy Spirit is doing out in our community, which is creating spiritual thirst in the hearts of unbelievers and using us to share with them how Jesus can satisfy that thirst.

Now brothers and sisters I can understand why that might cause a bit of resistance in us.

First and foremost because we are just busy people and our schedules are full and we are always running from one thing to the next and the last thing we want is one more thing that we have to do – and co-operating with the Holy Spirit by sharing Jesus with other people sounds an awful lot like another thing we have to put on our to-do list.

So we're a bit resistant. I get it.

Secondly, all this talk about rekindling the passion and love that we first experienced with Jesus may have us reaching back and looking for something that we're coming to realize was never really there... or perhaps we're realizing that we

did not have any sort of deep thirst that resulted in some sort of dramatic experience with Jesus.

And even though we do believe in Jesus, and we confess Him as Lord and seek forgiveness of our sin from Him and put our trust in Him – we're not exactly sure about when and where that happened and how it came about?? It just sort of did.

In many ways it's like an arranged marriage where after living with your spouse and being intimate with them over a period of time... you end up realizing that you have come to love that person – but it didn't start of in a flurry of passion and starry-eyed romance.

So it's difficult to try and figure out when and how your faith came about – so we're hesitant.

Or – to use another marriage or relationship analogy, anyone who has been married or in a serious relationship for any length of time knows that life happens while you are in that relationship... there are good times and bad times, you

develop bad habits, you come across issues that you can't resolve, you have significant experiences like having children and so on - and all of that changes you.

You're not the same person that you were when you were first married, and there is history in your relationship that you are guarded about – you still love your spouse and you are committed to the marriage - but to somehow rediscover or rekindle that initial passion and excitement you had doesn't seem to take into account the reality of who you have become and the barriers that might now exist in your relationship.

It's not uncommon to go through the same sort of experience in our relationship with Jesus – there may be a lot of baggage to work through - so we're hesitant.

Thus it is somewhat providential that we are looking at thirsting for healing on this Sunday as we conclude this sermon series because there is a lot in this particular type of thirst that can speak to the reasons behind that sense of hesitancy we might be experiencing.

For instance, you may have noticed that when you are sick or your body is injured and you attempt to go and workout – your body “hesitates” as it were. You can't function the way you are supposed to, you can't accomplish what you are supposed to...

And it doesn't matter if it is a physical ailment like a bad cold or the flu or if it is an emotional state you are in, like dealing with grief, or if it is a mental illness such as depression – you can't function the way you need to.

And it's no different with Christ's Body brothers and sisters.

Now if I were to ask you what the Body of Christ is supposed to do... what would your answer be?

At the very least I hope that you would respond with what Jesus commanded in Matt 28:19 which is to *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”*

So – let’s put this all together friends... If we as the Body of Christ start to attempt to do what Christ commanded us to do – but we find our Body hesitating... what does that mean? If we are attempting to rekindle our passion and love and enthusiasm for Jesus Christ so that we will have the motivation, so that we can recognize spiritual thirst and we will have the ability to relate to other people with that same thirst... but there this hesitation to engage fully in this... what does that mean?

Well brothers and sisters it means that the Body of Christ is injured or sick in some way and it can’t operate the way it’s supposed to, it can’t fully do what it is supposed to do until it heals and it is recovered and back to full health.

Now there are two kinds of ways in which the Body of Christ can be injured or sick – the first way is when you have an unhealthy congregation in a group sense. There are bad or negative group dynamics going on with cliques and church gossip, they are out to get their pastor or worship leader and so on – that’s not an issue for Valleyview.

The other way has to do with the reality of the lives of those whom Jesus calls and brings to himself and makes into His Body... and how he sanctifies those people.

Remember what Jesus said in Mark 2:17 *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

So essentially the Body of Christ is made up of sick people who are in the process of being sanctified – we are sinners who are on the way to becoming saints, we are those who are being made holy – as Paul says in Philippians 1:6 *“he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...”*

So we are sick people who are being healed and are in continual need of healing... but, what kind of sick people are we?

And my experience has been that most people attempt to be Soldiers and just carry on stoically pretending like we are not sick when we truly are and not admitting that we still need the

healing that Jesus intends to continue working in our lives to bring about that sanctification.

That's where the agricultural illustration of us being like branches grafted into a vine is such a good one. (John 15) We are like dried up sticks, but the Holy Spirit inserts us into Jesus' Body, and then the life giving sap begins to fill us and the dried up stick grows green leaves and bears fruit.

That's how it should work – but then when the Body of Christ attempts to do what it is supposed to do and there is some hesitation, then we know there is still areas of sanctification that need to occur; there are still areas that need healing and deliverance from Jesus through the working of His Holy Spirit.

So if we are experiencing resistance as we attempt to identify our spiritual thirst, if we are finding we don't have that initial excitement and enthusiasm and love for Jesus, if we are feeling that too much life has piled up and we are too cynical, jaded or bitter to go back to that first love – then friends we

have just identified your spiritual thirst... and it is a thirst for healing.

You see it's easy to recognize something as a "spiritual" thirst when someone says *"My soul thirsts for God"* (Ps 63:1) It's much more difficult to identify our sickness and illness as a spiritual thirst – we tend to only see those things as physical, and we tend only pray to Jesus about the really serious situations where it is not certain if the doctors or medicines will be effective.

But brothers and sisters – we as the members of Christ's Body here at Valleyview have a spiritual thirst and a need for healing – not only because Christ came to heal the sick, but because the Body is resisting doing what it is supposed to do, it's not ready yet, not fully healed yet....

And Jesus is not honored, nor is He impressed, nor are we obedient in any way by attempting to stoically soldier on when we are sick or injured in whatever manner or form that might take.

James 5:14-16 says *“Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”*

Are you hesitant about being used by the Holy Spirit to share Jesus with those in our community who are thirsty for forgiveness, thirsty for righteousness or thirsty for God because you are physically sick?

Then let's pray to Jesus for your healing, let's pray for success for the doctors and physicians who treat you, let's give glory to Jesus for miracles and for medicines - and you will start to experience how Jesus satisfies your thirst for healing – and you won't be hesitant to identify your thirst and share how Jesus met it with the people whom the Holy Spirit brings into your life.

And if you are hesitant to try and rekindle a first love for Jesus because you're not sure it was there with any kind of intensity to begin with? Then friends please consider that might be from some sort of emotional block that has gone up in you to try and cope with the painful things which inevitably happen to us in our lives.

Let us pray to Jesus with you, to have Him reveal what is blocking you in this way, and Jesus can bring restoration and healing from that – so you can move towards wholeness and begin to experience more of the love and passion of your relationship with Jesus – and you will definitely have “rekindled” your spiritual thirst.

Or maybe there are other things that are in the way of rekindling your spiritual thirst, and you know exactly what they are and you're hesitant to go near them because they are painful, or you are ashamed, embarrassed or afraid to deal with them.

Let us bear your burden with you – together we will go to Jesus and tell Him about those barriers, we'll confess whatever role you may have played in constructing them and ask Him to remove them – He is the God who makes a way where there seems to be no way! Pray for each other that you may be healed.

Or maybe you know that you are just so busy, running from one thing to the next that any additional thing you are called to be involved in – even a call from your Lord Jesus who has the right to command our life.... even such a call feels overwhelming and you hesitate and resist.

But remember friends that in the parable of the sower our Lord warned us that the seed of the gospel can be choked out by the weeds that grow up around it, and He explained that *“the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.”* (Matt 13:22)

So let us pray with you for spiritual healing, for peace, for Shalom – let us come before Jesus together and ask him to

restore the life and power and vitality which He came to give you, to confess the way in which we grieve His Holy Spirit and to ask Him to give us a fresh re-filling for the work which HE calls us to – and to let anything else fall by the wayside.

Brother and sisters – we are the Body of Christ... the lost who have been found, sinners who are being made into saints, the sick who are being healed and need more healing... let us admit this and turn to Jesus who is the Great Physician

Jesus healed many, many people during His ministry on earth – and when He ascended as Ruler over all, to the right hand of God Almighty, He sent His Holy Spirit to continue that healing ministry.

Today brothers and sisters – He has shown us our spiritual thirst and He offers Himself through His Holy Spirit to satisfy and quench our thirst for Healing.

Come to Jesus friends – he is more than willing to give you Healing. Amen.