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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany (Series B)

February 8, 2015

Text: Mark 1:29–39

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus possesses the authority of God the Father almighty to preach repentance and faith, to call disciples to follow Him, and to cast out demons. Having been authorized by the Father to do these things, Jesus also uses the Father's divine power in His mission and ministry. The gospel reading from last Sunday revealed the Lord's authoritative power to silence and cast out a demon.

It was a rather bizarre situation. Jesus was preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. And a demon possessed man was in the congregation. That demon proclaimed Jesus to be "the holy One of God." But he spoke that truth in order to deceive and to detract from Jesus' authority and power to be the Savior of the world. With a single word, Jesus commands the demon to leave the man...and the demon must obey. He can't do otherwise. Jesus, the Son of God the Father, has the power and authority of His Father. When Jesus speaks, what He says happens. The congregation at Capernaum was amazed and shocked at the Lord's authority.

That brings us up to today's gospel reading. What would you do after casting out a demon? It's an odd question I know. You preach a sermon, cast out a demon and ...then what? Today's reading says that Jesus and His four disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, go to Simon's house (vs. 29). Mark, the gospel writer, doesn't tell us why they went there. It could have been as simple as going home after Church for lunch and a well-deserved nap. Preaching can be exhausting and I can't even imagine the mental, emotional, and physical stress created when exorcising a demon. But it can't be easy.

For whatever reason, they go to Peter's house. And wouldn't you know it. Peter's mother-in-law is there, sick with a fever (vs. 30). From one problem to another; demons to diseases. What does Jesus do about the woman's fever? Give her a Tylenol with instructions to retake ever 4 hours? Stay in bed. Drink plenty of water. And you'll be better in a few days.

Well...not exactly. Amazingly, Jesus treats the fever almost the same way as He treated the demon. He casts it out. Vs. 31 says "the fever left her." When Jesus commanded the demon to leave, Mark says the demon convulsed the man but then came out of him (vs. 26). In both cases, the malady was sent away

These past several weeks I've stated repeated that the Epiphany season helps us remain sure and confident in the essentials of our most holy faith. This week is no different. So what might the essential teaching be this week? That Jesus has authority over demons and diseases and any other physical, emotional, or mental problem? That's certainly true. Jesus has authority and power over demons and diseases. But I think there's a much more fundamental teaching revealed in today's gospel reading.

The first thing you need to note is that Jesus treats spiritual problems, as exemplified in the demon possessed man, and physical problems, as exemplified in Peter's mother-in-law's fever, the same way. They are no different to Him because both are illegitimate, foreign elements corrupting this world. And that's the essential teaching that must be known in order to preserve our most holy faith. Sin, sickness, death, and demons are foreign enemies that must be defeated; there can be no compromise with them, no mutually agreed upon truce or cessation of hostilities.

Jesus treats them all as foreign invaders that must be defeated and cast out. This you must know or the rest of Jesus' mission and ministry will either be misunderstood or corrupted beyond recognition.

Sin, sickness, death, and devils all go together. They're part of the same sordid lot. But they aren't linked together in the way so many believe. Too often people try to make a simple, logical cause and effect relationship. You get sick or something goes unexpectedly wrong, you must have sinned. It's a nice simple equation, as simple as one plus one equals two. Some act of sin or neglect of righteousness equals sickness or depression or loss of friendships or other relationships.

Sometimes there is a one to one correlation between sickness and sin. If you abuse alcohol or drugs you may get sick, maybe even die. You overeat or eat all the wrong things and you may experience more sickness. You abuse sex and you may contract an STD. You live a stress-filled life and you may get high blood pressure and all the maladies that accompany such a disorder.

As true as these examples are, the Bible does not teach that sickness and spiritual oppression always occur as a result of some act of sin or disobedience.

Let me give you some examples. Joseph, the son of Jacob, fled from sexual sin and was thrown in jail for his righteousness. Job lost his health as well as his wealth because of his righteousness. His so-called friends kept saying that Job must have sinned. He needed to confess his transgressions and so be restored. But Job maintained his innocence. In the end, the Lord told Job's friends that they have not spoken his judgments or councils correctly. And we mustn't overlook the countless Christian martyrs, ancient and modern, who suffered and died for no other reason than confessing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, you can't easily say, "You commit this much sin and you get this much bad happening in your life."

Sin and sickness, disease and demons are related to each other in that they were not part of God's original design and intention for His creation. You were not created to catch the simplest cold or endure nagging allergies or any kind of disease or sickness. Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual disorders of every kind are foreign invaders that Jesus came to this earth to conquer and cast out. He treats them all the same.

Paradoxically, the only solution to these foreign invaders is death and resurrection. You want to be free from sin and sickness and spiritual oppression? Then you must die with Christ and rise again with Him. Good Friday and Easter are God's solution to demons and diseases, sickness and sin. And let's not beat around the bush any further. The greatest malady – death – it too is a foreign invader. And Jesus conquers it in the same way as the rest: Calvary's cross and Easter resurrection.

The essential message for today is that sin and sickness, demons and disease, and death are all foreign elements that have corrupted this creation. And Jesus treats them all the same by casting them out. His entire earthly ministry was focused on saving His people from these foreign elements.

After Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, many more people suffering from various kinds of physical and spiritual afflictions came to Jesus for healing (vs. 32–33). And He did the same thing each time: cast out the malady with His authoritative power.

But then Jesus did something that might make us question everything I've said thus far. According to vs. 35, Jesus rises early in the morning to pray in solitude. Please note that saints of God...(this is a side comment ) Jesus Himself, the very Son of God

in human flesh, took time to pray to His heavenly Father. He does the very thing He expects of us. Peter and everybody are looking for Jesus. There are more healings! More ministry Jesus! How could you waste your time like that?

Look at the Lord's response, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out" (vs. 38). The purpose of the Lord's ministry was to preach, not to heal every isolated spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental disorder. He came to preach repentance and faith and accomplish the restoration of all things. In other words, every time Jesus healed someone it was an authenticating sign demonstrating the truth of what He was preaching.

And what He preached was the kingdom of God was at hand. The time for repentance and faith are here now. All the maladies of this world find their remedy in Jesus' death and resurrection. Every healing is a sneak preview into the ultimate and final victory we will experience in the resurrection on the Last Day. Jesus' preaching ministry prepared people for Good Friday and Easter as well as their own resurrection at the end of the age.

When I visit people in the hospital or in other situations of adversity, I often remind them that their complete victory will be experienced when Jesus comes again and raises them from the dead in triumph and victory. Life on this side of eternity will always be marked by some form of malady and disorder. But Jesus has defeated every form of sin, sickness, and disease. Every demonic spirit is subject to the Lord's power and authority. They are cast out. Jesus is our healing!

Our congregation's mission and ministry is to proclaim, to preach to every human soul that Jesus has defeated and cast out all spiritual and physical afflictions. Let us shout on the roof tops the triumph offered to all! On this side of eternity, we received the promise and pledge of victory through the forgiveness of sins and the on-going reception of Christ's love and grace. Our triumph is experienced now by faith and in its fullness on the Last Day. Jesus has cast out every human malady. The victory is won. The time is at hand. Let us rejoice in our victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.