

Jesus' Healing Clinic Is Open

Mark 1:29-39 (NIV84)

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. ³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" ³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Last week we were amazed as Jesus showed his authority not only in the words he spoke but also in the act of driving out a demon during the worship service he was teaching at. It was no surprise to us, then, when our reading ended with the words, "News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee." (Mark 1:28) Our verses today pick up on that same Sabbath day.

Immediately after that worship service, Jesus and his disciples James, John, Simon, and Andrew head to Simon and Andrew's home. It's kind of been a long day already. Now it's hopefully time to rest and enjoy this day that the Lord has made. However, Simon Peter's mother-in-law is laid up in bed with a fever, severe enough that she is not getting up and walking around. It must run through Peter's mind that if Jesus can cast out a demon, he can probably do something about this fever. So, Simon and Andrew tell Jesus about Peter's sick mother-in-law.

Jesus wastes no time with this request. "So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up." (verse 31) This isn't a kind of walk-it-off helping her up, that she just needed a little encouragement and she would be better. No, when Jesus took her hand and helped her up, "the fever left her and she began to wait on them." (verse 31) Recovering from a fever is not instantaneous. You're weak afterwards, your legs a little wobbly, your head feels light, not all there, like trying to cut through fog. You still need lots of rest and sleep to build your strength and health back up. That's how we know that this was a miraculous healing. Jesus has the authority to make the fever go away and restore Simon Peter's mother-in-law immediately to full strength that she doesn't even hesitate to get up and be a hostess to Jesus and his disciples.

I don't know if someone from Peter's household went around reporting this healing or if the events from the worship service earlier in the day with Jesus driving out the demon was the main impetus, but people wanted this amazing healing authority of Jesus to come to their lives. "That evening after sunset [meaning that the Sabbath was done] the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed." (verse 32) So many people came that Mark describes the scene as "the whole town gathered at the door." (verse 33) There is no hesitation on Jesus' part. He doesn't sigh heavily and begrudgingly go to work. He simply "healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons." (verse 34)

Jesus heals people. Seeing what he did that day, you kind of wonder if Jesus considered for a moment whether or not to open a healing clinic for all these people that needed his care. Not to make it sound crass, but don't we all kind of wish that Jesus had opened a healing clinic that we could go to? We all have health problems. Even those of us who are in good health have aches and pains that we would like to see go away. And yes, many of our prayers are filled with requests for healing.

Does it upset you that Jesus does not have a healing clinic for you, or that he doesn't seem to do for you what he did for all these people who came to Simon Peter's house? Why can't I experience a miraculous healing like they did? I need healing. Modern medicine is great and all, but it's not Jesus as my physician. Don't placate me saying that it could be worse or that everything happens for a reason. God has the power to heal me physically. He proves it right here. Why doesn't he open up the healing clinic and fix me? I pray for it. Why doesn't he do it already?

Yes, our reading today proves that Jesus cares about our physical well-being, but he made a decision following that long day of healing people and driving out demons. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (verse 35) Jesus, while being true God, went to God in prayer. And when his disciples found him that morning, Jesus announced his decision. Yes, everyone is looking for me. Everyone wants physical healing. "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (verse 38)

Jesus decided not to open up a healing clinic. Hundreds of millions of people in Jesus' day needed physical healing, but if that was all that Jesus would do, he would not fulfill his mission. His mission was to preach, to bring the kingdom of God to people, to rule in their hearts and lives with his undeserved love poured out on them and ruling over them in total righteousness. By preaching, he would give a greater cure, one that the people weren't asking for: a cure to sin.

Sin - anything that we do that is not perfect, anything that is thought or said that does not align with God's will - is a disease. In fact, it's a terminal disease, and every person in the world is infected with it. We are born with it. Surely I was sinful from birth; sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5) It starts inside of me, often with thoughts that then lead to actions, and it grows to consume my whole body.

The only thing that can cure us of this disease of sin is a transfusion of perfection, of holiness, of righteousness. Jesus is the one who is immune to sin. He is the one who came to give perfection to us as a gift, and he gives it to all people by the means of his authoritative Word. This is what God has given to us in his Word, in our baptisms, in his body and blood given and shed for you. Jesus cured our disease of sin by transferring to us his perfection.

Although Jesus primarily came to cure us of our sin, it's important to acknowledge that he also healed many people. Sometimes we are tempted to disregard physical needs for the one thing that is needful for salvation: knowing Jesus Christ and him crucified for the forgiveness of your sins. If we only ever focused on the spiritual, we would not be following Jesus' example. Jesus may not have officially established a healing clinic that day, but he did still spend his time healing people physically. So, not only do we offer and give the Jesus cure for sin, but we also look to see what we can do now for people in need.

That is why organizations such as WELS Christian Aid and Relief exist. It's a specific group within our national church body that seeks to tend to the needs of those who are in poverty, those who are without medical clinics, who are underinsured, who are suffering bodily. Their mission is to reflect Christ's love and compassion to souls suffering from disasters and hardships. They reflect this love because they are motivated by what Jesus has freely done for all of us. As they work to help people physically, they look forward to sharing with people why they do it. That's their opportunity to share the Jesus cure for sin. This is work worthy of our efforts. When you give offerings, you support that work. A portion of all our offerings goes to our national church body and funds the supplies and people needed to care for others physically in the hope of then sharing Jesus with them as well.

But caring for the body as well as the soul is not just something done on a global level. We do that right here on the congregational level, the local level. Our outreach committee organizes donations here at church to do things like gather school supplies and then give to E.G. King Elementary School. We did the same with Toys for Tots. We provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes here in our church on Wednesday nights specifically to serve people in our community so that they can know English and be more productive citizens. We are now starting to share the Jesus cure of sin in ESL as the teachers have the student reading from the Bible. You can support our ESL program. Talk to Christy Padayao, our ESL coordinator; she's always looking for new people to give their time to help our ESL students learn English. Informally, I see the care you show each other all the time in what you do to help one another. Not to do specific call outs, but I've seen families give people rides to church, bring them meals when needed, help people fix things around their home, help get them to the hospital, and more. Cara Toomey is beginning work on formalizing a Care Committee to stay on top of things like these.

And if you are not able to do these things, to give of your time, talents, or treasures in those specific ways, you can pray like Jesus did. You can invoke the name of the Almighty Creator to act, to bring miraculous healing to people as he has done in the past. Because Jesus has cured us of the eternal consequences of our sin, you can ask him to intervene directly in our lives physically and spiritually. It's not wasted breath because he says prayer is powerful and effective. Often he answers those prayers through natural means, uses us to care for one another. Even if you don't see the immediate healing that you want, Jesus has promised that your body will be completely healed on the Last Day. Although it may not be on your time table, God heals you completely.

Jesus came to heal us first and foremost spiritually by curing us of the eternal consequences of sin. He cures that disease in us by giving us his perfect life substituted for ours through the means of his authoritative, amazing Word, making us right with God. He also came to show us that he is willing to heal us physically. Although he did not open a healing clinic for us to go to and have miracles performed on us by him, he does encourage us to use our gifts and abilities, our times and talents, our resources and money to bring healing to people physically. The only reason we care about people in both body and soul is because Jesus already showed us that care and because he has cured for us the disease of sin. We may not be building health clinics on every street corner in Utah, but, as we are able, Christ's love motivates us to show that love back to others in all the various ways that we can. Like Jesus, we care about both the body and the soul of all people. Amen.