

## Seeing Greater Things: Authority Over Sickness

Mark 1:29-39 (NIV)

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. <sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" <sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

The greater things that we have seen Jesus do continue to mount. We've seen his authoritative power to make a paralyzed man walk and to forgive his sins. We've seen Jesus exercise his authority over demons so that they have to do what he says. Today we pick up where we left off last week and see yet another greater thing.

"As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them." (verses 29-31) Not a word is spoken as Jesus, Simon Peter, James, John, and Andrew seek some respite and some food at Peter's and Andrew's home. But when they arrive, Peter and Andrew immediately notice that Peter's mother-in-law is sick in bed with a fever. They know that Jesus can do something about this, that he has authority over any disability and any demon. They bring this sickness to Jesus's attention, and Jesus completely heals Peter's mother-in-law. She is restored so quickly and promptly that she begins to serve them. The greater thing we see today is that Jesus has authority over sicknesses!

The actions of the disciples make us reflect: Am I so quick to bring a fever to the Lord? There is a fine line here of living our faith by trusting God to have our bodies do what they're designed to do and fight off a fever or a sniffle or a cough or a cold as well as taking any sickness to the Lord in prayer. Since fevers typically just need a couple of days of rest and then they go away, we sometimes may think that a fever isn't worth God's time, that he has more important things to worry about and take care of and this is going to go away anyway. Jesus shows us this greater thing of healing a fever so that we know that God does in fact want us to bring our fevers, our colds, our sniffles and sneezes to him and trust him to relieve us, even as our divinely designed bodies are already fighting and overcoming it. When we have any sickness, this is a time to exercise our faith and bring it to the Lord in prayer.

But this leaves a big ol' elephant in the room, doesn't it? If God can do this greater thing of healing sicknesses, any sickness, then why doesn't he heal everyone instantly who prays to him? How can we be stuck in a pandemic if Jesus has authority over sickness? Has he not heard our prayers? For what possible reason does he allow some to be affected so much more drastically than others that some people die from a virus while other people either show no symptoms or just feel a little tired. Does God not care? Is he not involved in our day to day lives? Is he not powerful enough to do this? Does God really have authority over sickness?

Someone in Jesus' day had to be thinking this just as we are because, although Jesus healed a lot of people, he didn't heal everyone in Israel – not even all the religious Jews. Not every cold, not every disease, not every physical ailment was healed by Jesus during his ministry. Did Jesus not love those people? Was their faith not good enough? Did he not have time for them? Did he not care?

Even if no one who heard of Jesus' healing was thinking about why doesn't just heal everyone, Jesus showed us that he was thinking about it. In the Gospel account according to Luke, chapter 4, Jesus pointed out that back in the days of Elijah and Elisha, not everyone received miracles. In fact, of all the believers who had the skin disease of leprosy in those days, we only hear of a foreigner and unbeliever named Naaman being healed.

When we jump to God not caring since he doesn't heal everyone, we're assuming something. We're assuming that a fever, a cough, a cold, a sickness cannot serve any good purpose and therefore God has a moral obligation to heal everyone if he is really all powerful and all good. But is that a right assumption – that a sickness cannot serve any good purpose for us? Is there a good reason why God does not always do the greater thing and take away every disease and sickness?

When you purposefully scour the Bible for miracles of physical healing, you find that there are really only three short periods of history that contain them: the ministry of Moses at the time of the Exodus, then about 500 years later in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC with the

prophets of Elijah and Elisha, and then during the three years of Jesus' public ministry and the years of the apostles' subsequent ministry. Although there are many miracles of healing recorded in the Bible, they only seem to be prominent when a messenger from God was proving to others that they were God's spokesperson. Thus, a reason why healing occurred was to bolster the message being preached.

Okay. Miracles of healing are maybe more rare than we thought. But, still, why doesn't Jesus just always use his authority over sickness to heal everyone all the time?

The Apostle Paul personally learned one of these reasons. He had some ailment which he called a "thorn in the flesh." It hurt him. He pleaded with God three times to take it away from him, but God didn't. God said to him in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I [Paul] will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Paul learned that sometimes God doesn't take away a sickness because it caused him to rely on God for his strength instead of relying on himself. We learn that same lesson when we stop relying on ourselves to fix our fevers, colds, all of that, but instead take it to the Lord for healing – no matter how minor or how large it seems. By doing so, our faith increases as we trust God to deal with this. This is a spiritual work out, of sorts, one where God shapes and molds us in ways that benefit us, but maybe without healing us from that specific sickness.

Joni Eareckson Tada learned this. She sought physical healing of her quadriplegia. She prayed and fully believed that God would heal her. In her words, "I certainly believed. I was calling up my girlfriends saying, 'Next time you see me I'm going to be running up your sidewalk. God's going to heal me.'" Yet Joni is still in a wheelchair today. Forty-five years after the accident that left her paralyzed, God has still not healed her. Her perspective today is: "God may remove your suffering, and that will be great cause for praise. But if not, He will use it, He will use anything and everything that stands in the way of His fellowship with you. So let God mold you and make you, transform you from glory to glory. That's the deeper healing." God hasn't taken away Joni's quadriplegia, but by doing so, he has strengthened Joni's faith in him so that she can now encourage others to put their trust in the Lord. God has authority over all sicknesses and disease, but he can still have us go through them and have them so that we can lead others to trust in him while they go through something similar.

At other times in the Bible, believers talk about sickness in relation to a sin. Sometimes God allows sickness into our lives as a consequence of sin, and maybe for a sin that we still hold on to and are not turning away from. Is the sickness a way to get you to reflect on your life and ask yourself if you are right with God? Is it to remind you of the shortness of life, that I want to live each day in repentance because I don't know when my end will come? Has God allowed a sickness in your life and not taken it away with his authority so that you don't focus on making earth and the things of this life your home and instead focus you on heaven?

While God can and does use suffering through a sickness to benefit you, he does not reveal each and every reason why you or I or anyone else gets sick. He doesn't ask us to figure that either. Instead, he tells us to trust in him. He shows us the greater thing today of his authoritative power over a fever, over all sicknesses, so that we have the assurance that when he take all these physical ailments to him in prayer that, whether or not he takes it away, he can and will use it for our good – whatever that may look like. He calls us to trust his promise that he indeed works all things for our good, and that includes fevers, colds, coughs, viruses, pandemics, all of it. While we walk through suffering these sicknesses, Jesus says that he will go with us every step of the way and lead us to quiet waters and green pastures because Jesus has authority even over sickness. We will see even greater things yet when Jesus leads us to be in heaven with him where there will be no more disease or sickness.

Until we see that greater thing, bring all your ailments to God. While we do, God promises us that "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." (James 5:15-16) As many of you are doing, don't hesitate to ask others - your pastor, your church - to pray. That is why we put a prayer request sheet out there in the lobby and a link to it on our website. Because we have seen the greater thing of Jesus' authority over sickness, we take it all to him knowing that he will answer those prayers in the ways that are best – whether it is to take it away immediately or to let it remain.

We have seen the greater things of Jesus again today. We rightly call him the Great Physician because he has authority over sickness, taking away the fever of Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus heals us body and soul – wholly and completely. One day, we will see the greater thing of heaven where there is no more sickness or disease. Until then, where our sickness remains or is taken away by God, encourage one another to bring all our ailments to him because he has authority over sickness. Amen.