

Epiphany 3 -January 22, 2023

Text: Matthew 4:12-25

Theme: Be Healed in the Name of Jesus

We don't talk much about physical healing in the Lutheran Church. We leave that to the Pentecostals and the Charismatic Roman Catholics. But when you read the Gospel that is before us today, you cannot avoid the reality that Jesus was miraculously healing people of all manner of diseases and infirmities and if He did it then, He can do it now.

The texts today talk a great deal about Jesus bringing light into the world. Take a minute to ask yourself what that means for us. Unlike the people of Jesus' day, none of us really combat physical darkness very much beyond fumbling for the switch when turning on our bedside lamp in the middle of the night. We have lights everywhere. We have lights in our pockets and on our wrists. But what, in our world, would be like darkness for the people to whom Jesus spoke? Think about darkness for them. It was something in which danger could easily hide and they might well be powerless to see it until it was too late. It was something over which they had no control and no ability to mitigate beyond weak flames from precarious candles, and it was something from which only the supernatural could deliver them. Darkness for them was much like disease, sickness and infirmity for us. Just at the end of the Gospel

today we see the bringer of light is also bringing healing of all kinds: healing from disease, healing from disability and even healing from demon possession.

Before you become irritated with Jesus for not healing you as he healed all those in the Gospel for today, we need to understand what Jesus was doing in His healing ministry and why He was doing it. Notice that Matthew tells us that these were all different kinds of ailments. "...and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them." What do all these ailments have in common? All illness, all disease, all aches and pains, all paralysis as well as all demonic possession is a direct result of sin. My bad knees are because of sin. My horrible eyesight is because of sin. Were there no sin in the world, we would not suffer any physical or mental maladies. Adam and Eve did not have irritable bowel syndrome or ingrown toenails before the fall into sin. When Jesus walked on the earth, He wanted to be clear that neither sin nor the devil could stand against Him. So, He not only proclaimed the Good News of salvation with His mouth, but He reversed the effects of sin on the world in people's lives right then as He spoke. Talk is cheap but Jesus backed His talk up with action. Not only do we hear the Gospel from Jesus, but we see the Gospel at work.

But Jesus' purpose was not to be a side-show. His purpose was not to heal for the sake of healing, or in order to become famous, or even just because He felt compassion for the afflicted. His primary purpose was to insult the devil and to make it absolutely clear to him that all the afflictions with which he tormented God's people were coming to an end very shortly. Very shortly. Jesus' very shortly is like when Noah tells me he is about to take out the trash. That might mean he is going to take the trash out in 10 minutes or 10 days and I have no clue as to how to narrow those parameters. Remember that Jesus is not bound by time the way we are. When you are an eternal being, time is pretty meaningless to you, don't you think? So, we look at whatever our maladies are and we wonder, will we have to deal with this our whole lives? As though our whole lives were just the short time we spend here on earth.

I once knew a lady who was paralyzed and she told me that she refused to believe that God had condemned her to spend the rest of her life in a wheel chair. First, God never condemned her to anything. A drunk ran a red light and hit her car thus paralyzing her. What God did do was spare her life and the life of her young son who was in the back seat and who escaped the wreck unscathed. Second, no, she will not spend the rest of her life in a wheel chair. I can guarantee that because the rest of our lives is a really long time

and once our body dies, all the brokenness dies with it. When our body dies, our soul is set free from the all physical chains that weighed us down in this life. Then, when we get our new bodies on the Day of the Resurrection, those bodies will be perfect and whole. Whatever illness, trouble or brokenness you have might be miraculously healed by God this afternoon if He so wills it. Never stop asking Him to do so. But if your body dies before He heals you, you will be healed then. So it is a win-win for Christians.

Read the Bible. Jesus has proven that He can reverse all sickness, all sorrow, all brokenness. He has already died on the cross to ensure that this great reversal will take place for us. Now we patiently wait to be healed either now or later. That should change the way you perceive what ever plagues you. When I get a paper cut, I might gripe about it a little but it's a paper cut! The Gospel for today promises us that whatever ailment we have is no more than a paper cut for us. It might be inconvenient. It might be uncomfortable. It might be frustrating. But, in the big scheme of things for us, it is just a paper cut and it has already been healed. We have already been healed. We are on our way. We're just not quite out of the valley of the shadow of death yet, but we will be very shortly.