

The Priority of Preaching While Healing Mark 1:35-45

How does the NT typically describe Jesus' reaction to those in need?

In Gentle and Lowly, Jesus describes himself as gentle and lowly of heart, but what do the gospel writers say? The key word is COMPASSION.

We'll get to that in a bit, but first we need to see what Jesus prioritized...

Last week we did a fly over of the end of chap 1 and saw how Jesus was drawing crowds because he healing and casting demons. The word about Jesus was getting spread all around so that "Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

v. 32-45 Others are healed and His fame spreads.

These final verses of ch 1 can be taken as a whole in that they are additional proof of what is already established – Jesus has power in preaching, healing, and over demons.

35 In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. 36 Simon and his companions searched for Him; 37 they found Him, and *said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 He *said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for."

39 And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

40 And a leper *came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and *said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He *said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

V. 35-38

Jesus made a priority to get away and have communion with God.

We may not be facing the same dramatic issues that Jesus did, but we also need to have our hearts rooted in the presence of God.

*** Do you know how to do that? If so, DO YOU and I do that? (Use the Word, Psalms are a great way to do this)

There is a good chance that at some point in life you WILL FACE A SUDDEN TRAUMATIC ISSUE.

Life will go off script and we feel uprooted. Where do we find roots and rest?

Ex 1 Sam 30:6 David and his men had settled in Ziklag. While they were gone the Amalekites had raided, burnt it down and taken their wives and children. David and his men wept until they had no more power to weep.

v. 1 Sam 30: 6 Moreover, David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

"strengthen" = encouraged; be strong, be courageous.

"the ability to control your fear in a dangerous or difficult situation":

That is what David did, IN YAHWEH.

It is what Jesus did when He met with the Father. David and Jesus KNEW God.

Have you been there? Not YET??? Many times???

How we respond will largely depend on how well our soul KNOWS God and how to find rest in HIM.
Ps 62 My soul waits upon God alone; He only is my rock, my salvation, my defense. I shall not be greatly moved.

HOPE IS THE FIRST DOSE: Dr. Lee Warren – neurosurgeon in Army and private practice. What he found in battle zones or in hospitals is that Hopelessness is Deadly.

“I saw four patterns over and over, which I called Crashers, Dippers, Untouchables, and Climbers. Allow me to explain the difference.” (I BELIEVE these patterns correspond to the practice of Communion with God.)

Crashers: People who seemed like they had everything together, self-reported a lot of faith, and were happy—until something bad happened, such as receiving a scary diagnosis or their loved one getting sick. These folks crashed emotionally and never recovered.

Dippers: These folks started high on the y-axis with good lives and then dipped lower as they first learned of their problems. They stayed down there for a while and then somehow turned it around and began to climb and ended up high on the quality-of-life axis regardless of their medical outcomes.

Untouchables: These folks seemed bulletproof. They started high, found out about their troubles, but never really wavered in their faith, happiness, or their relationships with people or God. These patients did not experience a significant or lasting change in their baseline emotional state, even if they ultimately died of their illness.

Climbers: This group surprised me the most. They started low, often with a history of trouble, addiction, prior illness, loss, etc. They did not report being happy or faithful or having much quality of life to begin with. When I told them they had cancer, or that the injury would produce paralysis, or that their mom was not going to make it, they often received the news with something akin to having expected it. But then, somehow, something happened that caused them to discover faith, find joy, and end up being happier at the end than at the beginning.

V. 38 Jesus knew the crowd was curious and wanted the show – healings and deliverance. For Him, the priority was on his preaching. The miracles simply validated his teaching authority.

v. 39 He was on a mission to preach and minister throughout Galilee. (The Good News of HOPE)
As he did so he continued to cast out demons and heal the sick – specifically the leper v. 40 ff
As the healed leper (and others) went out to spread the news of Jesus it became difficult for him to enter a city. While Jesus stayed in rural areas, the people were coming from everywhere.

After a busy day of healing and casting out demons, 1:30ff, Jesus got up early to go pray. Simon Peter found him to encourage him to get back to the crowd, but Jesus said, “Let us go somewhere else to the nearby towns, so that I may preach there also. For that is what I came for.” (v. 38) So he went to the synagogues throughout all Galilee preaching and casting out the demons.

NOTE: Jesus GAVE a priority to preaching!!

He knows the crowds were forming because of the healings, not for the truth. He did meet their need for healing or deliverance, but his purpose was to preach and bring the good news of the kingdom of God.

NOTE; I’m struck by the apparent frequency of demonic activity...connected to the synagogues. Just because a building or gathering is “religious” doesn’t mean it can’t harbor demonic influence.

*** Application items...

There is no comprehensive NT view of healing or miracles in the gospels or epistles.

A few key points... Dr. Rayburn summarizes it this way...

First, miracles are not found everywhere in the Bible. They were never the ordinary experience of believers in

biblical times. There are clusters of healing miracles in the ministry of Jesus, and we see some with the apostles, but it is not normative.

BY DEFINITION, MIRACLES ARE NOT NORMATIVE.

Indeed, the ordinary person of biblical times never saw a miracle.

Miracles are clustered in three historical periods only. The first is that of the exodus, the wilderness, and the early conquest of the Promised Land; the second is during the ministry of Elijah and Elisha; and the third is the ministry of Jesus and his apostles, especially the early ministry of the apostles.

By the end of the New Testament there do not seem to be miracles occurring. The later writings of Paul, for example, make no mention of them.

At one time simply to touch a handkerchief that Paul had touched would heal the sick. [Acts 19:11] But at the end of his life, in 2 Tim. 4, we hear the plaintive sigh of a man who was missing a treasured friend: "Trophimus I left ill at Miletus." The time of miracles was past, even for Paul.

At times Jesus left a crowd without healing everyone. He would leave one area to go PREACH elsewhere. The apostles saw miracles of healing, but it did not characterize their ministry. Paul, who saw people healed and raised from the dead tells Timothy to drink a little wine for his ailments.

Second, miracles in the Bible are always associated with the ministry of prophets and apostles. We know of no miracle that is not associated with these unique offices. The Bible certainly never teaches us to expect that we would witness miracles, much less be able to perform them, without the presence of a prophet like Moses or Elijah or an apostle like Peter or Paul.

Third, when Jesus' ministry was complete and he had returned to heaven, Peter tells us what his miracles were for. In his Pentecost sermon he says to the Jews that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know."

In other words, the purpose of Jesus' miracles was not in the first instance to get sick people well. It was to reveal Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Miracles and revelation always go together in the Bible!

Supposing that whatever Jesus did we can all do is a mistake that very godly sincere believers have made. Like many of you, I have been blessed by the books of Andrew Murray, the son of Scottish Presbyterian parents who went to South Africa in the 19th century to serve as a missionary with the Dutch Reformed Church. He believed that Christians, with supernatural means of healing at their disposal, should never resort to doctors. Once, while preparing for a preaching tour, his nephew, though ill with TB, expressed a desire to go with him. Murray encouraged him to go trusting that God would heal him. They read together some verses of the Bible, prayed for healing, thanked God for the healing that they knew would come, and set off on their trip. In three weeks, the nephew was dead.

Murray was a man of faith, but he misunderstood the miracles of the Bible. They were never primarily about getting people well – though they did make the sick well; they were to authenticate the divine authority of the one who wielded this almighty power. And that, unmistakably, is what Jesus' miracles did: they made people realize the unique and divine authority of Jesus.

Miracles were magnificent pictures of the salvation Jesus came to bring. Such is the case here with the leper. He was cleansed. His physical malady and the resulting uncleanness that kept him from the temple, and the community of faith, were illustrations of everyone's spiritual condition. We all are outcasts because we are spiritually unclean, and Jesus alone can make us clean.

There is no guarantee that God will heal supernaturally. He might, or He might use medicine that is more complex than the wine he recommended to Timothy.

That doesn't mean that God won't or can't heal. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't pray for healing, but we do well to remember that even those who are healed will eventually die.

v. 40 -45 A Leper is cleansed.

When Jesus saw the leper, he was moved with compassion. That is the #1 response of Jesus when he saw people in distress. Jesus came to deal with us as sinners or as victims.

The leper was a victim; it was not a sin issue per se.

He didn't ask to be healed, he asked to be made clean/pure = Katharos – cathartic. It would be cathartic physically, emotionally, and relationally.

Leprosy was a horrible disease in the ANE. It resulted in people losing feeling in their hands, feet, arms, face, etc. They would suffer injury and not know it so they would get infected.

Many people get off to a good start in reading the OT – GEN, EXODUS, then Leviticus with two chapters describing the tests for leprosy and the 'treatment' and at that point folks give up reading.

If a Jew was tested and it was leprosy, then that verdict would not only mean a dreadful, physical malady that you would have to deal with for the rest of your life, but it was also the worst possible announcement you could hear with respect to your fellowship in your home, your community, and your church. If you were found to have leprosy, you were determined not only to be unwell, but you were pronounced unclean.

The leper was cast out and wasn't supposed to come near others, especially not a crowd. To touch a leper means that you were now unclean for a time.

This was a horrible disease from a physical and social standpoint. It was a life in a sort of solitary confinement, unless you wanted to be around other lepers.

The man in this text had been to the priest and the diagnosis was in – he was a leper. He had to isolate himself from family and friends.

He heard the commotion of the crowd and took the risk to see Jesus with the hope of being healed. He came up to Jesus with a bold proclamation of faith, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Most people who encountered a leper would recoil in fear. They did not want the disease, or the isolation associated with leprosy.

Jesus did the unthinkable – he touched the leper....and healed him instantly. Touching a leper would make Jesus ritually unclean, unless the touch made the man immediately clean.

Jesus, the renegade Rabbi, was not afraid to get his hands dirty as he ministered to victims and perpetrators. He came to bring new life to sinners and to the victims of sin, i.e. ALL OF US.

Jesus told him to say nothing and sent him back to the priest, but he became a disobedient evangelist.

Last week we talked about what is referred to in the Gospels as "the messianic secret." Jesus was cautious to keep a lid on his identity and ministry early on so as to avoid an even greater demand upon his time.

People had "fake news" about the mission of Jesus, The Messiah. Many thought he would be the fighter who would free them from Rome. They misunderstood the Suffering Servant of God motif from the OT.

In this and other instances the one healed or delivered went out and proclaimed the news of Jesus anyway.

45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

What if today, we lived as if it were our mission to proclaim the salvation of Christ to all peoples in our Judea, Samaria, and the remotest parts of the earth?

What motivated the leper? The Good News of being cleansed.

That should motivate us as well. Our cleansing is NO LESS dramatic than that of the leper.

Spiritually speaking, we WERE LEPERS, outcasts, separated from God. But Jesus came to us with a cleansing touch as well.

If you want to see a miracle, just look around. The fact that any of us is here today is a miracle of God's grace. We were dead and have been raised to life. We were "unclean" but have been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

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