

Luke 4:38-44 Jesus got up, left the synagogue, and went into Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. They asked him to help her. ³⁹He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. ⁴⁰As the sun was setting, they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases. He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹Demons also came out of many people, crying out, "You are the Son of God!" He rebuked them and did not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. ⁴²When it was day, he went out to a deserted place. The crowds were looking for him. They went up to him and were trying to prevent him from leaving them. ⁴³But he told them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is why I was sent." ⁴⁴And he continued to preach in the synagogues in the land of the Jews.

There are so many times in life when we simply need to take God at his Word. When my kids were little I sometimes wondered how we would afford to raise them. Then at the same time that my eldest was starting at MLS's sister school, Luther Prep, my car was on its last legs. How can we afford to do both? It seemed impossible. We did have to watch our expenses closely, but God provided.

I can't tell you how many times in my ministry I have said to people, "I know that God will bring blessings out of this. I can't wait to find out how he does it." I said it at call meetings where a congregation had been calling for over a year, but no one had accepted it yet. I said it in hospital rooms when my members have gotten a diagnosis that they really didn't want to hear. I said it when we face budget problems and we wonder how in the world we're going to make ends meet.

Texts like this one give the reason why I can say that sort of thing with a straight face. Look at what our Savior is doing in this text. You see his love for us pouring out in every syllable. He hasn't gone anywhere. He lives and rules over everything with our good and his glory in mind. Jesus Cares about our physical needs and about our spiritual needs.

Jesus' earthly ministry was only going to last for roughly three years. By way of comparison, today is the fourth anniversary of my first service here as your pastor. Three years is just not a lot of time. Throughout the Gospels we only get glimpses of a typical day in the life of our Savior. John ended his Gospel by saying, **"Jesus also did many other things. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the world itself would not have room for the books that would be written."**

When you compile Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts of this day we find that Jesus was extremely busy. All of this took place on the Sabbath Day, that is, Saturday. It began with Jesus preaching his great Sermon on the Mount which takes up three full chapters of Matthew's Gospel. After that he healed a leper while he was coming down the mountain on his way to Capernaum where today's lesson is set.

Not long after that he healed the Centurion's servant who was dying. Then he taught in the local synagogue and healed a man who was demon possessed. Then and only then do we get to this text. I have to imagine that Jesus had a lot of days like this. There was so much to do and so little time to do it all. No wonder that at a different time he was able to sleep soundly on a boat while it was being tossed all over by a storm.

This reminds us of a couple things: Jesus is a true human being just like us. During his ministry he got tired. He got hungry. He felt the full range of human emotions without any sin of course. It also shows us his great love. He didn't come here so that he could have an easy life. It was anything but. He wore himself out because he loves us that much. He wanted to reach every soul that he could. As a result, he knows what we go through, not just because he knows everything as true God, but because he's been there.

Then we finally get to this text. Luke tells us, **"Jesus got up, left the synagogue, and went into Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. They asked him to help her. ³⁹He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them."** Remember that Simon is the original name of the Apostle Peter.

All of Jesus' miracles are different. It's the same almighty power but it is revealed in all kinds of different ways. Peter's mother-in-law had a high fever. We don't know what the root illness was that caused it. They didn't have Tylenol. They couldn't put an ice pack on her head because there were no freezers. Even today you know that a high fever can just sap you off all your strength.

The interesting thing about this miracle is that Jesus addressed the fever as if it was a person. Rebuking someone means that you point out where they are doing something wrong so that they can change their ways. Fevers don't make moral decisions. They are your body's natural response to an infection. This isn't showing how little they understood about the human body. It shows the complete control that Jesus has.

Normally when you recover from an illness, you slowly but surely get better. Your fever slowly drops. You feel better but you still are more tired than usual. That wasn't the case here. Jesus gave the command and Peter's mother-in-law was immediately fully healthy and eager to serve her Savior. This also reminds us that God is concerned over the seemingly little things of life. No detail is too small for the God who loved us dearly.

Luke continues, ⁴⁰**"As the sun was setting, they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases. He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them."** We might wonder why the people waited until sundown. Well, remember I said before that this was the Sabbath day. The people weren't supposed to do any work. If someone was seriously ill it would probably take some work to help them get to Peter's house. At sundown the Sabbath ended so they were free to go.

How many people did Jesus heal that night? It's hard to say. He already had a very busy day and now he was being kept from getting some rest. But Jesus' great love wouldn't allow him just to send people away. He just kept healing people. Luke tells us that he laid his hands on them. He didn't need to do that. He healed the Centurion's servant without being anywhere near him. He raised Lazarus with one powerful command.

That touch also shows the love of our Savior. If someone was sick you would imagine that people would want to stay away from them. There were no antibiotics back then. If that illness made them ceremonially unclean they had to live outside the city by themselves. We need human contact or pretty soon we go insane. Jesus wasn't just concerned about the illnesses. He was concerned about the whole person.

This text isn't just an example of some neat things that happened in the past. Miraculous signs prove that Jesus is exactly who he says he is. He is true God come into this world. It also serves as a reminder that Jesus wields the same power today. Just because a situation might seem impossible to a doctor or to us, it doesn't mean that it actually is. Take your earthly concerns to the God who loves you and wants nothing but the best for you. Later the Apostle Peter put it beautifully, **"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you."**

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One problem that people have with the Bible in particular is the whole concept of demon possession. They say that it is simple mental illness that no one back then had any clue about. Now it is true that there are some mental illnesses that make people do some truly unusual things. People can have seizures like ones talked about in the Bible. But no one with mental illness does anything like what is described in this text.

Luke tells us, ⁴¹**"Demons also came out of many people, crying out, 'You are the Son of God!'"** They knew full well who Jesus was and it scared them to death. But as powerful as they are, they were completely powerless against the Son of God himself. Jesus didn't allow them to speak anymore not because they were lying but because he didn't need testimony from them. It's like a politician today wouldn't want to be endorsed by an ax murderer.

Demon possession was not Satan exerting his power. It is an act of desperation. It's clear that he didn't fully understand God's plan, otherwise he never would have convinced the Jewish leaders to crucify Jesus. He didn't realize that he was playing right into God's hand. That's something you notice throughout the Gospels. Satan is powerful, but not particularly bright. He just destroys without any plan or any hope because he doesn't have any.

You don't hear of demon possession as much today because Satan doesn't need to do that. He'd rather work behind the scenes. He is very happy to have people say that he doesn't exist so they won't be on guard against him. Remember that when Jesus died on the cross Satan's head was crushed. He's still going to be a jerk but he is powerless to yank believers out of the hand of the God who loves us and gave himself for us.

In last week's Gospel lesson we heard about how Jesus preached in Nazareth for the very first time. He showed himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. The people were amazed at what he said, but there was one problem. They knew him too well. They thought he was just Joseph's son and nothing more. When Jesus called them out on that, they responded by trying to push him off the cliff that the town was built on.

So from that point on he moved his main base of operation to Capernaum which was about 40 miles away on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. They had the exact opposite reaction to Jesus. **"The crowds were looking for him. They went up to him and were trying to prevent him from leaving them."** To an extent, it's understandable. They were amazed at his teaching and miracles. Why would they want him to leave?

When we look at those two cities, we see ourselves. Someone might say, "Pastor, I've never wanted to push Jesus off a cliff!" That probably never has crossed our minds. But whenever we sin, especially when we know we shouldn't do it but we do it anyway, we are pushing him off his throne in our hearts. We let our own desires or the attitude of the people around us become more important than he is.

Or sometime we're more like Capernaum. We want to keep Jesus just to ourselves. We know that he is for everyone. He lived and died for everyone. But we are reluctant to share him with anyone. Maybe it's because that person is a pretty big jerk. Well, that alone tells us how much they need Jesus. Or maybe it's because we always find some excuse—it's not a good time, or I'll do it tomorrow, or I'll lose them as a friend. They need Jesus as much as anyone. That's why God brought them into your life.

Thankfully Jesus didn't have to miraculously escape from Capernaum the way he had from Nazareth. He would frequently come back, but he needed to move on. Luke tells us, ⁴³**But he told them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is why I was sent."** ⁴⁴**And he continued to preach in the synagogues in the land of the Jews."**

That's such a big sentence: **"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God."** He must do it! There is no other choice. That is what his Father wanted. The word "preach" literally means to bring a message to people that they hadn't heard before, like when the newspapers announced that World War II had finally come to an end and our soldiers were coming home.

Messengers don't always bring good news, but Jesus did. He brought the best news ever—the news of forgiveness and eternal life through him. He had come to fulfill all the promises that God had made from the Garden of Eden until then. Even as he spoke, he was obeying his Father's will perfectly for us. Several years later he would fulfill all the Old Testament sacrifices by offering himself on the cross as the only sacrifice that could really pay for sins.

Finally he is preaching about the kingdom of God. We define that as "Christ's rule in our hearts by faith." The Holy Spirit works through the Word and Sacraments to create faith in our hearts, to make us God's children, and to welcome us into his kingdom. We aren't just servants in that kingdom but as children of God we are princes and princesses in it. So we walk with God through this life until he calls us to our real, lasting, eternal home in heaven.

Jesus Cares about our physical needs and about our spiritual needs. This lesson for today is so much more than a history lesson. All of these things really happened, that is true. The more important thing is that we get a glimpse of the heart of our Savior. We can look to the future in confidence with our heads held high. He has everything under control.