

LUKE 4:38–44. (EHV)

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. He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. 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. Demons 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. When 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. 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." And he continued to preach in the synagogues in the land of the Jews.

When you think of your Savior, when you picture him in your mind, what do you think of? Do you think of Jesus the Good Shepherd, standing in the middle of a flock, carrying a lamb in his arm or an injured sheep around his neck? Do you think of Jesus the rabbi or teacher, standing in a boat and addressing the attentive crowds on shore, or standing on a hillside and addressing the attentive crowds in the grass? Do you think of Jesus the sacrifice, with his hands stretched out on the cross, gazing in agony toward heaven? Do you think of Jesus the king, seated at God's right hand in heaven and crowned with glory?

Or do you picture the Jesus we see this morning, yet another version of Jesus to love and cherish—rebuking illness and laying his hands on the sick? Do you think of Jesus the healer, the healer of body and the healer of soul?

1. Healer of Body

Jesus is in Capernaum, a village on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. He visited the synagogue there on the Sabbath and taught with authority. While he was teaching, he was interrupted by a demon-possessed man. Jesus cast the demon out of the man, and all the people were amazed by the entire experience—his authoritative teaching and his power over evil spirits. And news about him quickly spread throughout the village and the surrounding area.

From the synagogue, Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter and his wife. Simon's mother-in-law was also staying with them, perhaps living with them, but she was suffering from a bad fever. And doesn't this confirm that the Bible isn't just some collection of fairy tales? Doesn't this sound just like a man, and especially like Simon Peter? "My mother-in-law is really sick, but you come on over anyway!" I'm fairly certain this wasn't Simon's wife's idea.

But since Jesus was there and he had just cast out a demon from a man, Simon and his wife asked Jesus if he could look in on her and help her. Jesus went into the room where she was burning up, as we say, and stood over her and rebuked the fever.

Can you imagine? When was the last time your doctor, before giving you a prescription or prescribing a treatment, said, "Let me try this first," and then tried talking to your pneumonia and rebuking it? Or your kidney stones? Or your vertigo? Or your illness? Or your cancer? But that's what Jesus did. We don't even get the impression that he touched her. He just rebuked her fever as if it were some sort of bad dog or misbehaving child, and it left her!

If you want proof that she was completely healed, not to mention a wonderful example of responding to Jesus's love, she immediately got up and began to wait on everyone, as if they were the ones in need and she was there to help them! This wasn't anything forced. Those who have been touched by Jesus's love desire to serve Jesus and to serve others, just as Jesus has served them.

And soon Jesus put her willing service to good use. You see, the sun was sinking in the afternoon sky, and word had spread about Jesus, in spite of the fact that the Jews couldn't travel very far on the Sabbath. So everyone was busy finding and gathering all their sick and ailing relatives and friends. It's like they were all waiting behind their doors like racehorses in the starting gate, watching the sun, waiting for it to set, because when it set, the Sabbath was over and the new day had begun. They could then fling open their doors, leave their homes, and go find Jesus.

And that's what they did. As soon as the sun hit the horizon, out they poured, lending their loved ones an arm or carrying them in their arms or on their mats. "Do you know where Jesus went?" "I think he's at the home of one of his disciples." "I saw him go into Simon's house." Here they come, from every lane and alley. "They brought to him all who were sick with various diseases. He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them."

Not once did Jesus say, "I'm not familiar with this disease." "That problem is outside my expertise. You might want to see a specialist." No, Jesus had power over every one of their various diseases. "Demons also came out of many people." Now you might be thinking, "Pastor, aren't we still talking about Jesus as the healer of body? We seem to be moving on already to Jesus as the healer of soul." I'm not so sure this doesn't belong in both sections. There are a couple places in the Gospels where physical infirmities are connected to evil spirits—once in the case of a deaf and mute boy, and in another case a woman is said to have been crippled by a spirit. There may be cases where evil spirits are responsible for our illnesses or at least are aggravating them.

Think about it: If you were an evil spirit who wanted to make humans miserable, wouldn't you use sicknesses and diseases as one of your tools? Wouldn't you carry germs this way or blow them over there on those people, if you were permitted to? Certainly most of these people were demon-possessed in the proper sense of that term, but in other cases it is at least possible that the demons coming out of people didn't have control of the people themselves, but were simply inside their illnesses, so to speak. But again, Jesus was able to heal all of them.

What should we take away from this? First of all, know that you can never have a physical problem or sickness or disease that Jesus does not have power over. That should lead us to thank and glorify him if he takes it away, and it should lead us to bear it with patience and resolve if he does not, knowing that he *could* take it away, so he must have some good purpose for letting us endure it. If it comes at the end of your life, one of his good purposes may be to use it to transfer you from this life on earth to life at his side in glory.

Second, whenever you're sick or have physical ailments, pray to Jesus, and pray to Jesus for others who have them. Don't put your ultimate trust in physicians or in pills or in procedures or in other treatments. Put your trust in Jesus and ask him to bless the physicians, to bless your medication, to bless your treatments. We pray, "Let these gifts to us be blessed," when we eat our food, because we know that our food would not do us any good if Jesus did not also add his

blessing to it. In the same way, then, pray to Jesus, “Let these gifts to us be blessed,” in connection with your medications and treatment. After all, who has given doctors and medicine to us? Who is the one who gives them their power? And no matter how good a doctor or medicine is, none of them has the power Jesus does. Jesus has power over every disease and sickness.

Third, when you pray, “Thy kingdom come,” and thereby also pray a curse on the devil’s kingdom and efforts, also be praying against the way the devil and his demons hurt and torment people physically. And it will not hurt you to specifically pray against the devil and his demons when you yourself are ill. Who knows how they might be affecting or aggravating your ailment? Jesus knows. And Jesus has infinite power over the devil and his kingdom.

2. Healer of Soul

But thankfully, Jesus isn’t just the healer of the body. And we should be grateful that he’s not, because one day, unless Jesus returns first, all of us are going to die. There is going to be some ailment or injury that Jesus will not heal, and we will breathe our last. This isn’t Jesus’s fault. It’s ours. Death is the wages of sin, our sin included. We need a healer not just of the body, but also of the soul. And here we see Jesus as the healer of the soul too.

We see that in his casting out of demons. Even though some of these demons may simply have been illness-demons, so to speak, certainly most of them were possessing demons, demons who had taken control of people and were filling their souls with darkness and using them to do horribly dark things. The apostle Peter tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from us, which means that in most, if not all, cases, those who are demon-possessed are demon-possessed by their own fault. In some way, shape, or form, by word or by deed, rather than resisting the devil, they invited him in. And then they had to pay the price for it, as not only their bodies but also and especially their souls were wracked with pain and guilt and sadness.

But when their concerned friends and relatives brought them to Jesus, Jesus told the demons to leave, and they had to obey. After the demons left, Jesus also doubtless encouraged them with the gospel and assured them of forgiveness in his name, so that he wasn’t just removing what was bad, but was also filling their souls with his healing power and comfort.

But notice how Jesus also cares for the souls of those not demon-possessed. When the demons came out, they shouted, “You are the Son of God!” But Jesus rebuked them and didn’t allow them to speak any further. You might ask, “Why not? Wasn’t it the truth?” Yes, it was the truth, and that’s precisely why Jesus rebuked them and wouldn’t let them speak. Jesus knows it’s not good for our souls to hear some truth about him from sources who don’t really care about us and aren’t going to give us the whole truth, especially when those sources are demonic. The most successful and most destructive lies always contain some truth. So Jesus tells them to be quiet, so that people won’t go running to demon-possessed people to learn more about Jesus.

Eventually the people went away satisfied, and Jesus was perhaps able to get several hours of sleep. The following morning, Sunday morning, “he went out to a deserted place,” no doubt to spend some time in prayer and meditation on God’s word. “The crowds were looking for him. They went up to him and were trying to prevent him from leaving them. 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.’ And he continued to preach in the synagogues in the land of the Jews.”

Did you hear? Jesus is telling them what the main attraction was the previous day. It wasn't his healing of all those different illnesses and diseases and ailments. He doesn't say, "I need to leave because I have to heal people in other towns too." He says, "I have to go because I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is why I was sent." Preaching the good news is Jesus's most pressing need, because it's our most pressing need. Jesus is a healer of body, but first and foremost he is a healer of soul. The good news that he came to give his life as a ransom for us puts our souls back together. The good news that, because of his life, death, and resurrection, our sins are all forgiven us makes our souls whole. The good news that he came to destroy the devil's work makes us healthy on the inside, even when our bodies are wracked with pain on the outside.

That good news alone gives us hope beyond our all our physical ailments and illnesses, hope beyond the grave. That good news heals our souls not only by assuring our souls of eternal life, but also by assuring them that on Judgment Day, they will be reunited with our bodies so that we can enjoy eternal life body and soul.

And Jesus makes it clear that that good news isn't just for certain people, but for all. And so he still desires to work through you and me to bring that good news to others too, so that their souls can also meet Jesus the healer, just as ours have.

Jesus the Good Shepherd. Jesus the rabbi. Jesus the sacrifice. Jesus the King. And yes, Jesus the healer. What a joy and privilege it is to know him—healer of our bodies and healer of our souls. Amen.