

"ALL WHO TOUCHED HIM WERE HEALED."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden

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Texts for the Sermon: Mark 6:53-56

Introduction.

Four short, straightforward, simple verses. Just another one of Mark's quick little summaries of the life and ministry of Jesus. Nothing new here, we have all heard this before, we can just move quickly along to the next big important text.

I confess that the first time I went through Mark Gospel to map out sermon texts when I got to this one I looked to see if it could be lumped in with what came before or after. I even thought about skipping over it and moving on. I decided to exercise a little faith and leave it as our text for this Sunday trusting that when I got here there would be something worth preaching on.

Too often when we come to very simple, easy passages we just take them at face value and move on too quickly. We don't see any great spiritual insight here so we go looking somewhere else.

How can we develop spiritual eyes and ears to hear powerful truth in the simplest of places?
How can we find the spiritual fruit in a text like this?

It begins with the conviction that all of Scripture is God's Word and all of God's Word is:

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12 the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

With that conviction then come to Scripture with a simple prayer.

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Come to God's Word and come to the preaching and teaching of God's Word hungry. These are the words of life, this is bread from heaven, spiritual manna. Come hungry and thirsty. Like the woman at the well, come asking "Sir, give me this water," (John 4:15). "Sir, give us this bread" (John 6:34). Come, taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).

Psalm 1:1-4 Blessed is the man who ...

2 [delights] in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Mark 6:53-56.

Let's look more closely at this summary and listen to what the Holy Spirit says to us this morning. Notice all the expressions of faith and receptivity.

They immediately recognized Jesus.

They ran all over the region telling everyone.

They brought the sick to Him.

They begged Him to heal them.

They believed that even if only they touched the hem of His garment they would be healed.

They were all completely healed of all their diseases.

Jesus' own disciples didn't recognize Him on the water, but these pagans immediately recognized Jesus. This chapter six of Mark opened with a story of Jesus' reception in His hometown of Nazareth where He was rejected.

Mark 6:5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. **6** And he marveled because of their unbelief.

What a contrast in Gennesaret, it appears the success rate was 100%. Everyone who so much as touched His garment was healed. Here faith seemed to be the norm. No doubters here.

They lined the roads and crowded the marketplaces in all the villages, cities and countryside. Jesus couldn't go anywhere without encountering needy people begging for help.

The excitement and anticipation must have been electric. Can you imagine the hope to being completely healed, of walking again, of being pain free, of seeing or hearing or being able to use your hands again? Was this a great day or what?

But what's missing? What's the down side of this? What's the note of sadness in this story?

Physical verses Spiritual; Body verses Soul.

Imagine if we set up two huge revival tents that covered the First CRC parking lot. In one tent there's a man preaching the gospel of eternal salvation for souls. In the second tent there's a man healing people of any and every disease. Which tent would have a line snaking all the way down Front Street?

This is a sad story really, they wanted healing rather than teaching, they wanted relief from pain rather than relief from sin. It's an old story and a modern story. It's a sad reality of human nature that we are far more concerned about our physical health than anything else.

We paid \$2.6 trillion for health care in the USA in 2010.

On average we Americans spend nearly \$8,000 a year on health care and our government spends over \$3,400 per year on health care. Over 18% of the US GNP is spent on health care. It represents almost one fifth of our economy (which is one reason why I oppose the intrusion of our government into such a huge part of our lives and our economy).

We may be the most health conscience people on the planet. And when our health fails we do all we can to restore it. Give us a physician who can guarantee an instant complete cure just by touching his white coat and we would go in a heartbeat.

In our text, people are running all over the whole region bringing the sick, lame, crippled, diseased, blind, deaf, mute, the lepers, anyone who was sick. They're traveling far and wide at considerable pain and expense.

And when they came they were bold to beg Jesus to help them and heal them. They weren't shy or bashful about it, they were loud, whatever it took. Oh that people would be that aggressive and bold about their souls.

Our souls are far more diseased than our bodies, and the disease is far more deadly. Our soul sickness is more severe than the plague, worse than a flesh-eating bacteria, cancer or AIDS. Do we believe that? Are we alive to the reality of our spiritual sickness? Most of humanity is completely insensitive to their spiritual condition, much of the world is completely blind and numb to the condition of their eternal souls.

Which tent would be full of people, the one holding out a cure for sick souls or the one holding out a cure for sick bodies?

How long will you go on neglecting your soul? How long will you remain in your sin and hang on to your evil desires? How long will you make excuses about your disinterest in prayer and Scripture and worship of God and seeking holiness and righteousness and the things that lead to peace and joy and heaven?

Philippians 3:8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

Here's a thought for you. Next time you get sick or have some physical ailment or weakness let it be a reminder the devastating effects of sin in our world and in our own lives and bodies. All our physical ills should wake us up to a far more serious concern, the sickness of our souls.

If all we ever ask from Jesus is a pain free, comfortable, happy existence then not only do we ask too little, but we are actually worse off. Our worldly comforts blind us to our spiritual poverty.

This is one of the reasons why God brings afflictions into our lives. To deliver us from the deadly lie of the good life here on earth.

Are those who claim to be Christians today any different than the crowds? Do we just come to Jesus to take away, the get what we want and be on our way, to use Him for our own selfish purposes? Are we consumer Christians, just in it for what they can get?

"Pastor, keep feeding me or I'm out of here. Keep saying what I want to hear or like to hear or I'll go someplace else."

Jesus came to save sinners, not to satisfy customers. Do we recognize Him in our midst? Our text says the crowds recognized Jesus immediately, but did they really? All they saw was a miracle worker, a healer. They didn't recognize the Great Physician of our souls.

So why did Jesus heal them? If they were so shallow and self-centered why did He just let them touch Him and be made well?

Why does Jesus heal?

Remember in Mark 2 when Jesus asked:

Mark 2:9-12 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— 11 “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

What is the glory of Christ? Is it not His authority and His power over sin? When He did *miracles* and healed people were amazed, something frighten, overwhelmed by the impressive displays of power. Jesus didn’t just do a few miracles, scattered ones here and there. The glory of Christ is seen in that everywhere He went He did thousands of miracles. He left a testimony concerning Himself everywhere He went.

He put His power and authority on full display for all to see. They were without excuse regarding who He was and what He was able to do. Only the hardhearted and spiritual blind could stay in their ignorance, but they are without excuse.

All of Jesus’ healing miracles were a sign of what He really came to do and of what He really had power to do.

He came to heal souls, to forgive sins, to cleanse consciences, to remove the stain of shame and guilt, to cure every form of spiritual disease. He came to cure pride, greed, selfishness, lust, love of the world, anger, unbelief, doubt, fear, envy, jealousy, idolatry, sensuality, impurity, sexual immorality, adultery, porn, cheating, stealing, lying, gossip, temper, bitterness.

Every single one of those soul diseases succumbs to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in a repentant sinner’s heart.

He opens deaf ears to hear His voice.

He opens blind eyes to see His glory.

He changes cold, hard hearts into hearts of love for Him and His people.

He opens closed minds to understand the truth and to love it and obey it.

He gives power to walk in the narrow and hard path that leads to life.

Application and conclusion.

What do you want from Jesus? Just a quick healing? Just some health and wealth, some prosperity and success, some good times, just to be happy? Do we care more about our bodies than our souls? Do we want Christ’s gifts rather than Christ Himself?

A lot of preachers preach that and offer that. Health and wealth, the Prosperity Gospel, name it and claim it, design your own destiny. There are probably a lot of sermons being preached this

Sunday with the title, “Go for the Gold.” Does that sound appealing to you, what our itching ears want to hear?

Speaking of going for the gold and the Olympics, let me challenge you this week as you watch or read about the Olympics. As you see all those men and women who have paid so much attention to their physical bodies and trained them and disciplined them, let that be a parable or illustration of what we should do spiritually.

I Timothy 4:7-8 ... Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

As you watch the Olympic do so with the eye of faith. When you see the skill and ability and behind that you see the practice, the discipline, the sacrifice, the hours and years, remember that the spiritual race is run and won the same way. Through discipline, sacrifice, practice, giving up lesser things to gain greater rewards.

Train for righteousness, train for holiness, practice godliness, pursue the goal of the upward calling in Christ Jesus.

The Olympics are a metaphor for a greater reality that the Olympics are a shadow of. They compete for human praise, we compete for God’s praise and glory. Their goal and prize is very temporary and short-lived, ours is eternal.

How you run matters, why you run matters, the goal matters. The prize is a million times better than any earthly prize.

I Corinthians 9:24-25 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Let us wake up from our complacency about our spiritual health. Let’s open our blind eyes to the spiritual realities and pay attention to our souls.

The day of miracles is not over. Jesus is still mighty to save every soul sick sinner who knows he needs a physician. At the very feet of Jesus there is help and healing. Bring your troubles, cast your cares and anxieties at the feet of Jesus. Bring your sin. Humble yourself and come and He will hear and answer.

Seek Christ not just to touch the hem of His garment, not just to get something, but to know Him and to be like Him and be with Him now and forever.

This is life, eternal life, life free from pain and tears, a life of unconquerable joy.