

Sickness

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, you can check us out at scgreensburg.com or by going to the SCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you for tuning in today to hear the Word of God preached. Our heart here at SCC is always to get into the Word of God, but most importantly, let the Word of God get into us and transform these hearts more and more into the image of Jesus.

Now, a Sunday school teacher was starting her lesson with her kindergarten class when she asked them this question. She said, okay, kids, if I sold my house, if I sold my car, if I had a huge garage sale, and I gave all that money to the church, would that get me into heaven?

And to her surprise, all the kids yelled, no! So she kept going. Well, what if I cleaned the church every week, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy?

Would that get me into heaven? And again, she heard an emphatic, no! Well then, okay, what if I was kind to animals, gave candy to all the children, and loved my husband?

[1 : 18] Then would I make it into heaven? And once more, they all screamed, no! Well, the lesson wasn't going exactly how this seasoned teacher was expecting.

And she thought to herself, well, they're a little more theologically sophisticated than I'm giving them credit for. So next she says, if none of these things will work, how do you get to heaven then?

And that's when the notorious five-year-old Brody shouted back, you gotta be dead first! Hey, welcome back to the third week of our series in the book of Matthew.

This series is called Greater Than. And if you'd like to follow along, go ahead and grab your Bibles. Turn to Matthew chapter 9. Matthew 9. And so far, we've talked about Jesus being greater than temptation.

That you and I can walk in victory. We don't have to walk defeated and depleted. We can walk in victory over Satan's attacks, over the flesh that loves to flare up.

[2 : 24] And we also talked about the reality that Jesus is greater than my past. When I am a child of God, those sins are washed clean by His blood.

And I'm empowered for a purpose to be His hands and His feet. And I am empowered to live a life of holiness in Him. But you know, to be real with you, today's a difficult topic.

We're going to talk about sickness. And even death, which are two things that most people listening to this right now probably understand all too well. The very thing that even little Brody was probably a little too blunt about.

And while I would never make light of sickness that you or a loved one has had, or even the loss of a loved one due to sickness, the good news is that followers of Jesus, we don't have to be afraid of death.

In fact, 1 Corinthians 2.9 even says, This is what the scriptures mean when they say, No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.

[3 : 34] The famous evangelist D.L. Moody, who led hundreds of thousands of people to Christ, he once preached it like this. He said, Someday you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead.

He said, Don't you believe a word of it. At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal, a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body.

He said, I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die, but that which is born of the Spirit will live forever.

So I think it's important for those of us who are born again believers in Christ, that as we talk about sickness, and we look at some of the people that Jesus healed from their ailments, and even raised from the dead, it's important that we keep the big picture in mind.

Because those of us who have the Holy Spirit living inside of us as that seal to show whose we are, we can deal with all the hardships that this fallen world throws our way, because we know the glorious future that awaits us in the presence of our Savior.

[4 : 59] Now let's start here. You should be in Matthew chapter 9 with me. And let's start in Matthew 9 verse 18. And let's read through this entire story here.

So stick with me just a little bit. I want to read a few verses with you. And let's just kind of try to get our arms around this story a little bit better. Okay? Matthew 9 verse 18. While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, My daughter has just died, but come and put your hand on her and she will live.

Jesus got up and went with him. And so did his disciples. Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.

She said to herself, If only I can touch his cloak, I will be healed. Jesus turned and saw her. Take heart, daughter, he said. Your faith has healed you.

The woman was healed at that moment. When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, he said to them, Go away.

[6 : 10] The girl is not dead but asleep. But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in, took the girl by the hand, and she got up.

News of this spread through all that region. Okay, so here you have this story of a powerful man in that society coming to have Jesus heal his daughter who had just died.

And then you also have an outcast who interrupts the first story desperate for her own healing. Now how many of you know what I mean when I say synoptic gospels?

Okay, I bet a few of you do. That refers to the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke that all tell very similar stories of Jesus' life. And then you have the gospel of John that many believe was written just a little bit later where maybe he had already read the other three gospels, okay?

But you have the gospel of John that maybe tells a little bit differently the story of Jesus and tells a lot of stories that maybe the others didn't feel the need to share. And there are times where you read a story just like this in Matthew and then you go to the books of Mark and Luke one or the other or even both and you get even more details that maybe Matthew didn't feel led to share.

[7 : 30] And this is one of those stories. Mark and Luke tell us that this synagogue ruler that Matthew leaves very just general was named Jairus. And he was the highest ranking religious official in Capernaum.

He's in charge of the administration and the operation of the entire synagogue and everything that happened there. He could have been a Pharisee as well, possibly, but there's no doubt he basically is the head coach over all the religious affairs.

And that's what makes this story even more amazing. The Jews at this point already hated Jesus. They were already arguing with him. And here's their leader in this area coming and bowing before him, showing him respect and honor.

And this guy says to him, if you will lay your hands on my daughter, she will live. That's faith. That's faith from someone who's supposed to oppose Jesus.

And the reality that he comes before the Lord in front of everyone shows that he's not worried that this could cause him some real trouble and possibly even cost him his job, his influence, his standing in the community.

[8 : 47] But here's why he risked it all. Nothing else had worked. His daughter's life means more to him. And his own religion, belief system, rules and regulations that they had crafted over all these years as religious leaders.

All this stuff had left him longing for real. Longing for more when life got real. Have you ever seen that before?

Guys, I see this all the time in funerals that I do. Both funeral homes here in Greensburg will often give me a call when a family doesn't have any church connection.

So I've done quite a few funerals over the years where Christians are for sure in the minority. And sometimes I even know people attending the funeral who have very strong opinions against Christianity, against God's word.

And yet like Jairus, when you're facing a sickness or even death that has turned your world upside down, all of a sudden your heart's now open to the truth.

[9 : 52] You realize that my way, my thoughts aren't working. And I've seen people who swore they'd never darken the doors of a church come up to me after a funeral and say, hey, we really appreciate what you said.

What church are you at? And what time are your services on Sunday? Now, they don't always show up. Maybe they go to another church where they have another family connection or friends that go there.

And that's fine as long as that's Bible believing. But sometimes it's just a seed planted that God will continue to work on. But I've also seen them come to church.

I've seen them hear the message of Jesus, discover grace, and go on to be a powerful witness for Christ. And here's the aha moment, okay?

When life hits hard, our hearts are often open to the truth. When life hits you like a Mack truck, sometimes that's when we finally say, okay, God, I'm ready to listen and follow you.

[10 : 58] Because sometimes when our religion has left us empty, when the horoscopes haven't quite filled that deep longing, when the stars, quote unquote, aren't aligning the way Madame LeCham claimed they would, when success and money leave me wanting, when my ways aren't working, that can be the moment where I finally get sick and tired of being sick and tired, and I turn to the only one who is greater than my sin and greater than my circumstances, who is greater than my sickness or someone I love's sickness.

But then watch this. This guy doesn't say, well, Jesus, I've tried everything else. I might as well give you a try. It wasn't this phoniness here. He says, come and put your hand on my daughter and she will live.

There's a confidence. Listen, there's a good chance that he's seen Jesus perform miracles. He's seen Jesus change lives. And he knows deep down that this has to be the Messiah.

There's something different about Jesus compared to the rest. Because when everything else leaves you wanting, listen to me here, Jesus gives life to the full.

John 10.10. So they start walking to this important man's house, and important is in quotes, and that's when this lady who has been bleeding for 12 years comes up to him.

[12 : 26] And I'll keep this very family friendly. We'll just say she had female problems, okay? And just like Jairus, she sees that Jesus is her only hope. Think about the suffering that she has endured over 12 years, the weakness that losing blood has caused.

And as she has sought out doctors to help, the book of Mark tells us this caused more issues, and it left her financially broke. No one has been able to help her.

In fact, she's worse. And here's the salt in the wound. According to the Mosaic law, she's considered unclean because of this bleeding, and she can't participate in worship to her God.

She's ostracized. She's seen as an outcast. So put yourself in her place for a second. Can you imagine the pain that went way beyond physical at this point?

The emotional? The spiritual? Because she can't worship? So here you have someone who's very influential. And I say worship. She couldn't worship in the synagogue, okay?

[13 : 31] Of course she could still worship. But here you have someone who's very influential in Jairus. And you have a lady who's seen as less than by most of the culture.

And what does Jesus make crystal clear? That you both matter to God. So here's another aha moment. Your pain matters to Jesus.

And he's greater than your sickness and your loss. You know, I really think my past has made me a little more sensitive to guard against favoritism.

Not to say that I can't fall into this too because I'm human. But I think some of it is growing up as someone who maybe didn't always get told that they come from the right family, okay?

Let me say it again. It did not come out right. So as someone who kind of grew up feeling like maybe they didn't come from, you know, the right family according to other standards.

[14 : 29] And even feeling favoritism shown towards others over me. And then we see James chapter 2 where he tells us not to treat those who have money or wealth or a certain last name or resources in the church better than those who don't.

And he paints a picture of what that could look like. And he concludes his example by saying in James chapter 2 verse 9, but if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as

lawbreakers.

This is also why our elders and our staff will never treat you differently if your clothes are more casual. In fact, I love to be more casual. If you make less money, if you're not seen as some influential person in our community, if you have what a lot of people would consider a rough past, whatever it is, we will not treat you differently.

My prayer is that you will feel loved and important if you are a part of this family. Yeah, we may have a few crazy uncles here, but who doesn't, right? And Jesus does the same thing in this passage.

See, I don't think it's an accident that these two stories are interwoven together so that you can see that God loves each of us the same. The leader of the synagogue, just like he loves a lady who is seen as unclean and kept at a distance.

[15:52] And as she touches the hem of his garment, he looks at her and he calls her daughter. In other words, you are my precious child.

Take heart, your faith has healed you, he says. And the next thing that God's word says is that the woman was healed at that moment.

And then, and then we are right back into this other story that we had previously started about Jairus and Jesus and his disciples arrive at his home.

And verse 23 puts it like this. When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes.

So let me stop right there. This is where you have to understand their culture. And it was very different than our culture today. Funerals in our area are often have a little bit more soothing music, quiet whispers.

[16:55] People are very, what we call reverent and quiet and respectful. But according to Bible scholar John MacArthur, this first century Jewish culture just looked a lot different, okay?

They had three ways, primarily, that they would grieve. First, you would tear your garments close to your heart to show that broken heart and that intense grief.

And this sounds weird to us, but second, a man of means like Jairus would hire professional women mourners who would loudly wail the name of the one who passed away.

Even mixing in the names of loved ones from the past. And then third, also a strange, a little strange thing to us, they'd hire professional musicians to play loud, troubling sounds meant to reflect emotional discord and the confusion of grief.

So this is what Jesus walks up on as this little girl's body lay lifeless in the house. And he immediately tells them to go away.

[18:03] It's not a request, it's a command. And they're not happy about it. So they mocked him with laughter. And that's also how you can tell they were hired. They go from what appears to be intense grief to laughter in seconds.

But Jesus didn't care about their mockery because he was on a mission. And as he entered the room, he grabs her hand and he speaks these words.

Talitha kum. Little girl, I say to you, arise. And Luke tells us that her spirit returned and she rose immediately from the dead.

Now listen, this was life giving. Not just for the girl, of course, but for everyone who was there. These people and most of us have never seen this before.

And because it was such an amazing miracle that no one could deny, Jesus' power and compassion started to spread through that region. The rich and the poor, the religious and not so religious alike, were flocking to this guy to discover true life in him.

[19:15] So let's do this for the rest of our time. Let's talk about a God who is greater than sickness. And here's the million dollar question that we will probably never fully be able to wrap our minds around on this side of eternity.

Why do some people get sick and then find healing in Jesus? And why do others who love the Lord just the same get sick and it only gets worse? And here's your brilliant theological answer for the day.

I don't know. But I will say that I've come to a point in my walk with Jesus where I'm okay letting God be God even when I may not always get everything I want.

I'm okay realizing that his will is perfect even though I don't like how some things turn out and I don't understand why. Because there is such a thing as a bigger picture that our finite minds may never

fully understand.

So for the last seven or eight minutes here let me make this case. If you love and follow Jesus if you are a Christian according to the word of God you have repented you've been baptized into Christ you are walking with him daily filled with the Holy Spirit if that's you then there's healing for sickness in one of two ways.

[20 : 40] And here's the first way. Jesus still heals on this earth. He can still heal you. Do me a favor and please don't be bashful here but right there from home if you have ever seen someone get a bad medical report let's just say it's cancer because that's where most of our minds will probably go.

But you've heard someone they went and know your body is full or it's in this area that is not good that you will not end well and then God's people started praying and the next thing I know whatever they thought they saw when they go to get that next scan it's gone.

If you've ever heard or known someone where that's happened right there from home won't you raise your hand for me? Okay. I bet you there are a lot of us who have witnessed this and it's often like well maybe the medical people didn't know what they were talking about or whatever and it's like no God healed that body.

Okay. I do not think that we just have a lot of raging lunatic liars in the house who are raising their hands right now. Okay. Because I've seen this plenty of times in what I do.

Jesus still heals and there's no reason for you to stop approaching the throne room of God boldly asking Him to heal yourself or someone you love. Listen to how James puts this and never forget that we have to frame this passage by realizing that everything must match God's perfect will.

[22 : 14] Here's what James 5 starting in verse 14 says. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them to anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well according to the word of God of course.

The Lord will raise them up if they have sinned they will be forgiven therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Right now I can think of quite a few people that I've known over the years even some in this church here that are struggling with cancer and other major issues that the doctors say will most likely take their life at some point.

But, but, Jesus is greater than your sickness. He is the great physician. He is enough. And I can also think of people in this church right now who were given three months or a year and a half or whatever length of time it was that they said this is probably how long you'll live and here they are a decade or two or five later and they still are walking in His healing.

So don't give up on praying and seeking the heart of God as you beg for healing because Jesus still heals on this earth. But there's others of you in this room who have some deep wounds from losing a loved one.

[23 : 44] And I truly am sorry. And I know you prayed your heart out. You got all of us to pray. And yet it still didn't end up the way that we wanted on this earth.

And although I would never make light of your grief, I can assure you that if they were in Christ, they received the greatest healing of all in the arms of Jesus.

So fill this in for me. Jesus absolutely heals in eternity. Jesus absolutely heals in eternity.

In the book of Daniel, chapter 3, we see a cool story about three worshipers of the same God that we worship. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or as VeggieTales called them years ago, Rakshak and Benny.

And when the king had this 90-foot-high gold statue put up, he commanded everyone to bow down and worship. However, these guys refused.

[24 : 47] They only worship the one true God. So some people saw that and some officials brought them before the king and he gave them one more chance to bow down and worship or you're in big trouble.

Your life will end. And listen to the response. This is Daniel chapter 3, verse 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to him, King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it and he will deliver us from your majesty's hand. But, and I love verse 18, but even if he does not, what is that

saying?

That sometimes God's will may not be exactly what we want. But even if he does not, they say, we want you to know, your majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold that you have set up.

Listen, you know that I'm really big on keeping things in context and this passage is not specifically talking about healing from sickness. It's about worshiping your God even when your life is in jeopardy for it.

[25 : 58] But this bold stance that Rakshak and Benny took can be carried over into sickness. And it may sound something like this, God, I know you can heal and I'm going to believe and put my faith in you that you will heal me, that you will heal my spouse or my other family member or my co-worker or my friend.

But even if you don't, God, I'm not going anywhere. You have lavished your grace over me. I'm not bowing down to anything else. I will worship you, Jesus, who died on the cross for my sins, who rose again three days later, and who offers me the greatest gift of salvation and even better, eternal life in paradise that will be greater than I can imagine.

Because what better healing is there than finding out that death for a follower of Jesus is just a chauffeur ride into eternity where you can run into the arms of your Savior and experience life everlasting.

In fact, I'll end this message with these words of hope. In Revelation chapter 21, starting in verse 1, the apostle John being given this amazing revelation, seeing these amazing things, here's how he puts it.

He said, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband.

[27 : 32] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Now look at verse 4, because this will be true in heaven, although it's probably hard for us to completely imagine. It says, He, Jesus, will wipe every tear from their eyes and in heaven there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and we will experience healing, guys.

We will experience healing like we could never understand on this earth. So listen to me. I'll say it one more time today. Jesus is greater than sickness.

Actually, let's say it one more time together. Say that with me. Jesus is greater than sickness. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for just the life that you give in your name.

In your name, Jesus. Father, I just pray for anyone listening to this message that you will just have your way in their heart. If they're struggling with an illness, if there's something going on that's just derailing so many things in their life, I just pray for your power and that you just show up and be greater than whatever it is they're facing.

[29 : 09] Lord, thank you for your words of hope, your words of life, and your words of power this morning. We pray all of this in the name above all names, the name of Jesus. And God's people said, amen and amen.

Hey, let me give you a quick invitation. If you are listening to this and maybe you got some questions about the Bible, about God, or maybe you just want to talk about giving your life to Jesus, reach out to us in a couple ways.

My name is Ray Sweet. Once again, First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. You can reach out by calling 812-663-8488 or emailing me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you. Have a great week.