

Call the Doctor

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 October 2008

Preacher: Rev. Jim Salladin

- [0 : 0 0] Let's pray together. Father, we're here because of what you've done in your Son for us. We're here because by your Spirit you've drawn us. And so we ask that by your Spirit you would open our hearts, that we can see and receive what it is you want to say. That we may glorify you, that we may enjoy you, that we might delight in you. So Lord, will you come and do that now? We ask this in your name. Amen. Well, we're continuing in the Gospel of Luke tonight, and so if you would keep that service sheet in front of you, we'll be looking at both the readings. It's another long one tonight, and so we'll be jumping around a little bit, so have that handy. The Gospel of Luke is one of the biggest books in the Bible, and it's kind of like in the morning, the slowly rising sun.
- [1 : 1 4] The sun in the morning doesn't just come on like a light bulb. It's not a flash in the morning. I've been seeing a little bit more of the sun rising, because it's doing that later thing, which I'm not sure I like, but anyways. But it rises slowly, and gradually it rises, and you see more and more of the morning, the mountains, the trees, the houses, your coffee cup, which is the most important thing to see in the morning. And that's kind of how the Gospel of Luke works. As you begin to walk through it, each story and each section shines more and more light on what and who Jesus is and what He's come to do. And as we've been walking through it, we've already begun to see some of the outlines of Jesus' ministry. We've seen that Jesus is on a rescue mission. You remember the first sermon that Jesus preached in the synagogue? He stands up and He says, The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring release to captives. And we've seen in the section surrounding that first sermon that in order for Jesus to bring release to captives, He has to overcome the great enemy.
- [2 : 3 8] He has to overcome Satan. And so in chapter 4, you saw Him engaging in battle with Satan in the desert and in the wilderness. And then as He begins His ministry, you see Him casting out demons, defeating Satan and releasing people who are under His power. Now this week, in our passage and in our readings that we've just read, the sun's rising a little higher. We can see more of who Jesus is and what He's come to do. And it turns out that there's another enemy, besides Satan, that Jesus has to conquer. And it's sin. And if Satan is the enemy that is outside us and wants to hold us captive, sin is an enemy that is inside us. It's an enemy that is almost part of us. And it is a terminal, deadly illness that kills us from the inside out. And the really good news in our passage comes right at the end. In verse 31, we find out that Jesus has come as a doctor to heal sin-sick souls. Look at verse 31. Jesus is talking.

[3 : 59] He says, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick do. I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

And our task tonight is to unpack some of what that good news means. What that last verse means. And if we're going to do that, we need to think about sin.

Which is not a fun topic, but it's an important one. And we need to see, first of all, that sin is a disease. And then we'll see that sin is a disease that must be diagnosed.

And then finally, we'll see that Jesus has come to heal that disease. Okay, so let's, first of all, look at sin as a disease. Look at verse 12. This is in the first reading.

It says, While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

[5 : 06] And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but said, Go, show yourself to a priest and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded for a proof to them.

Now I want you to look at those verses, and I want you to notice the word clean. Do you notice how many times it comes up? It's three times. The word clean comes up in verse 12, in verse 13, and in verse 14.

And it's significant because the leper comes to Jesus, and he doesn't use the word heal. He doesn't ask to be healed.

He means the same thing, but he comes and he uses the word clean. He comes and he says, Make me clean. And it's important, I point it out, because it's an indication that this story of the leper and Jesus is about more than merely a physical healing.

It is a physical healing, and significant for that reason, but it's more than that as well. You see, Luke is telling this story of the leper and Jesus to show us something about the nature of sin, and to show us something of the nature of Jesus' compassion toward those who are suffering under sin's domination.

[6 : 35] Let me explain. We need to think back to the Old Testament a little bit. Luke often has Old Testament references, and this is one. In the Old Testament, leprosy was used quite often as a metaphor for sin.

It was a vivid way in the Old Testament of describing and communicating just how serious sin actually was. And in the Old Testament, it was used as a metaphor for sin because leprosy is just such a horrific disease.

It's utterly unimaginable. And it's horrible in its physical suffering. I mean, it's horribly destructive to our bodies.

But the horror of leprosy went deeper than that. The horror of it had to do with the isolation that it caused.

Because in the Old Testament, Israel, and in some developing countries today, the moment someone was diagnosed with leprosy, they were immediately quarantined.

[7 : 43] They were immediately expelled from the society. And they were quarantined so that the disease wouldn't spread to everybody else. And so it became something like a kind of collective isolation.

You could interact with other lepers, but you couldn't interact with normal people. And that kind of isolation and expulsion was bad enough.

But in Israel, it also meant that you couldn't go to the temple. So not only were lepers cut off from people, they were isolated from God's presence as well.

And it was a horrible fate. But that's why it's actually an appropriate metaphor for sin. That's why God in the Old Testament used leprosy to teach Israel about sin.

Because sin is fundamentally a disease that isolates. Sin is a disease that cuts us off.

[8 : 51] It cuts us off from other people. It cuts us off from God. And that's where the horror of sin resides. I'm a black belt in sin.

I'm really good at it. I think most of us are. And if you think back over your life of sin, don't think too much about that, but you'll know that all sin, whether it's greed or lust or gluttony or pride or ambition, whenever we fall into sin, it always places me at the center of everything.

You ever notice that? It always places self at the center. And if I am at the center, it ends up pushing away other people and it ends up pushing away God.

It ends up cutting off my relationship with God. And in the end, you end up being utterly alone. You know, the most lonely person in the world is a greedy person.

There's no one more alone than someone who's engaged in sexual immorality. Right? And that's ironic because we pursue some of these sins out of a desire to be intimate with other people and yet it ends up leaving us so alone.

[10 : 24] This sin is a disease of isolation. And you know, that is what hell will be. Hell is going to be a cold, dark, eternal isolation from love.

Love of other people, love of God. And that's where it's going to be so horrible. Let's back to the story. That's why when the leper, having had this experience of isolation, when the leper hears that Jesus is coming, you know, we can understand, he throws himself at Jesus.

He has nothing to lose. He's got everything to gain. And so he falls in front of Jesus begging him, make me clean. Because clean, clean is the word.

When you're clean, you get to be with other people. When you're clean, you get to come before the presence of God. And so the leper falls before Jesus and says, make me clean so that I can be united with the people I love.

Make me clean so that I can come and stand before God in his presence. And isn't it glorious what Jesus does? He reaches out his hand and he touches the man.

[11 : 39] I mean, when was the last time this guy was touched? Years, I expect. Jesus, in his compassion, he reaches out, he touches the man and he says, I will be clean.

And then he picks up the leper and he says, go to the temple. Go to the temple so that you can be readmitted to God's presence. Jesus heals his body.

And that is glorious and wonderful and we can be ecstatic about that. I'm sure he was. But he's showing us that Jesus is a doctor who heals those who suffer from sin disease.

So sin is a disease but then secondly, sin is a disease that has to be diagnosed. I want you to think about Peter. Peter shows up in the first part of the reading, first part of the first reading and then I want you to think about the Pharisees.

They show up at the last part of the last reading. When you think about Peter and you think about the Pharisees, in this story, in this portion of the gospel, there's a very fundamental distinction between them.

[12 : 54] And the fundamental distinction, the difference, is that Peter's sin gets diagnosed. And the Pharisees remain oblivious to their sin.

Think about Peter. You remember the story. He's a fisherman, right? And he's been fishing all night, hasn't caught a thing. And Jesus shows up in the morning and he commandeers the boat. I don't know what Peter thought about that.

He doesn't seem to get a whole lot of option in the matter. Maybe he was sleepy. But anyways, Jesus takes over his boat and he keeps on preaching. But then things get interesting.

Things get interesting when Jesus stops preaching and he tells Peter to go fishing. And Peter, you know, he was an expert fisherman. He hadn't caught anything all night long.

But because the funny rabbi tells him to throw out his nets, he thinks, well, why not? And he throws out his nets and immediately he gets the biggest payday of his career.

[13:57] I mean, in terms of Peter's earning potential, this was the high point. And then it all went down after it. But the surprise in this passage is not so much the big catch of fish.

I mean, that is surprising. The surprise is in Peter's response. Here he is. He sees the net breaking under the weight of the fish.

He realizes that Jesus is no normal rabbi. And he falls to Jesus' knees a lot like the leper. And he says, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Verse 8. You see, in that moment, Peter for the first time saw the reality of his sin. His disease was diagnosed in that moment.

And that was the moment that he was ready to follow Jesus. But then there's the Pharisees. The Pharisees, on the other hand, you can read about them at Levi's party, you know, at the end.

[15:02] The Pharisees are the exact opposite because they hear Jesus teach, they see him heal and do miracles, but when they look at themselves, they can't see their own sin.

All they can see is that they are notably better than everybody else. Particularly Levi and his buddies. And because their sin is never diagnosed, they end up, as far as we know, left dead in their sin.

Now here's the point. We cannot be disciples of Jesus until we have a rigorous realization of our own sin.

We will never know the healing, forgiving power of Christ until we see we need it really, really bad. And it's not very easy for us to see our own sin.

And some of that is the culture that we live in. Some of it is just the deceit of sin itself. But some of it is because we live in Vancouver and most people in Vancouver don't even believe in sin.

[16:10] I mean, sin is something you use on a marketing campaign for Ben and Jerry's. You know, chocolate chip cookie dough. It's sinful and it makes you want to go out and eat it. You know? It might be, you know, it's effective marketing but we don't use the word much besides that.

And so, the fact that we live in Vancouver, that we live in British Columbia, Canada, you know, the modern western society, it means that the air we breathe will make us minimize our own sin.

It will make us, we will tend to deny sin whenever we can and it's hard for us to see why it's such a big deal in the Bible.

And that's why scripture is always using these images. You know, sin is leprosy. Sin is lameness. Sin is a disease. Sin is death.

And scripture throws these things at us to hit us upside the head, rouse us from our sleep, open our eyes to the truth so that we can see the reality that we are in grave danger, that we are terminally ill and that we need Christ's forgiving and healing touch.

[17:24] But go back to Peter for a second. I want you to see how Peter's sin gets diagnosed. We need to look at this more closely because it's really important. If we get off track on this point, we'll get in the weeds and we don't want to go there.

I want you to notice that Peter does not see his sin by looking at himself. Do you notice that? Peter is not in a quiet, reflective, meditative moment on a boat on a lake.

He's not thinking about himself at all. He's thinking about a net full of fish that should not be there. And he's thinking about a rabbi who he's very soon going to realize is actually the Lord of everything.

That's when Peter realizes his own sin. Peter sees his sin when he looks at Jesus, not when he looks at himself. And that's the way sin gets diagnosed.

You see, when Jim looks at Jim's own heart, when I try to evaluate my spiritual health, I pretty much always get it wrong.

[18 : 38] When I try to see how I'm doing by looking at my own heart, I usually end up very deceitfully justifying myself. You know, because I can always find somebody who's worse than me.

Most of the time. And I can certainly find reasons why, well, it's not that bad, given the circumstances, given my background, given stresses, strains, whatever.

I can always justify myself. Or, if I'm kind of honest and I look at it and I look at my sin, I can be driven to depression and to despair to such an extent that I end up giving up even trying to resist it.

Don't look at yourself. In Scripture, our hearts are diagnosed, we come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit when we look at Jesus. When we look at His righteousness and His perfect standard, His perfect love, that's the moment Peter sees clearly.

And that's the moment he's ready to receive Christ. And the same is true for you and I. So sin is a disease. It's a disease that must be diagnosed.

[19 : 55] And the diagnosis happens primarily when we look at Jesus, not when we look at ourselves. But then finally, the really good stuff, Jesus is here to heal sin and to forgive it.

I want you to think about the paralytic. That's verses 17 through 26. You remember the story. Jesus is teaching in a crowded house and a bunch of guys bring their buddy who is paralyzed to be healed.

And the house is full, they can't get in, so they go on the roof, they drill a hole and they let the guy down on ropes. And that had to be an interesting preaching experience.

And I'm sure that when the guy started, you know, rappelling down or whatever it looked like, when the guy started being lowered down, I'm sure that was a surprising moment.

But the really surprising thing, the thing that made the room just go, hush, was Jesus' reaction to the guy as he was lowered. Because Jesus doesn't heal him right away.

[21 : 05] He forgives him first. And when he does heal him, he heals him as a sign that the forgiveness Jesus gave him actually took, that it actually worked.

Look at verse 24. This is Jesus talking. The Pharisees get hot under the collar because Jesus started talking about forgiving and things like that. And so Jesus turns to him and says, But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

And he said to the man who was paralyzed, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. Now, when the paralyzed man's buddies let him down on the ropes, I'm sure that their priority was physical healing in that moment.

But when Jesus saw the man coming down on the ropes, his priority in that moment was spiritual healing. healing. And he gave him the gift of forgiveness and then he went ahead and gave him the gift of physical healing to prove that the forgiveness was real.

And the thing is, guys, Jesus knows his mission. Jesus knows his priorities in that moment. And Jesus knows that his mission, just like he says in verse 31 and 32, his mission is to save sinners.

[22 : 30] His mission is to heal the spiritually ill. And he's zeroed in on that task and on that mission. And the really good news for you and I is that he still is today.

And do you know what it means that Jesus is still on about healing sinners? It means we have hope. It means there's hope for people like us it means there's hope for a city like ours.

It means there is hope for friends and families like the ones that we have. Because there are areas of our lives, it doesn't matter how long we walk with Jesus, there are areas of our lives where the disease of sin still festers hidden in secret.

And it is so frightening for us to uncover those areas before God and before our brothers and sisters. But friends, if Jesus is still on mission to save sinners, then that means we get to run to him.

It means we run like the leper to Jesus. That we put all our trust in him. And he's promised to heal us. He loves to forgive us.

[23 : 53] And he wants to make us like that lame man who gets up and runs home glorifying God. It means there's hope.

And it means there's hope for a city like ours. You know, we get to be part of Jesus' mission here. We get to be involved in this as it happens in other people's lives. And that is a remarkable gift.

You remember Peter, Jesus says, follow me. Peter gets up, he follows him, and Jesus says, Peter, you used to catch fish, now you're going to catch people, just like I caught you.

And when Levi gets up and follows Jesus, the first thing he does is he holds a party in Jesus' honor and he brings all his worst sinning friends, you know. I mean, that has just overjoyed Jesus' heart.

And when Jesus calls you and I to follow him, he invites us on the family mission. You know, we get in on the family business. And it's an enormous privilege. It's an enormous and glorious task.

[25 : 00] You know, we as a church get to participate in the salvation of Vancouver. That's pretty good. And I hope tonight we haven't forgotten that wonderful privilege.

I hope we haven't forgotten that Jesus is on about saving sinners in this day. and if we have and if we've grown cold to those that we live with, that we interact with, that don't know Jesus, then it's a sign that we need to come back to him and that we need to come back to him and drink again from his grace.

Because when we receive the grace of Jesus, we can't help but have compassion on the people around us that haven't received it yet. And so my prayer for us as a congregation is that by God's spirit he would give us the gift of conviction and compassion.

Conviction so that we can know that healing touch of forgiveness and compassion so that we can participate as Jesus keeps on doing that today.

Let's pray. Amen.