Healing

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Date: 08 November 2026

Preacher: John Winter

[0:00] We're in chapter 2 of Mark's Gospel. Just going to read a little portion from Mark chapter 2. I could have selected a variety of passages,! and I'll be referring to two key passages in John.

Because this morning I was speaking on the topic of healing. And I want to show you how comprehensive this word healing is in the New Testament, and how relevant it is to us all, even if there may be some very fortunate people in here who've never suffered from any major disease or illness.
Most people here have, so they will know both the relief that healing brings, but also the need that they had for it at the time when they went through a particular crisis.
Chapter 2 of Mark, reading from verse 1. A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.
So many gathered there that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.
[1:15] Since he could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus, and after digging through it, low at the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven you. Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, what does this fellow talk like?
Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?
Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, Why are you thinking these things?
Which is easier to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Get up, take your mat, and walk, but that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.
He said to the paralytic, I tell you, Get up, take your mat, and go home. He got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all.
[2:23] This amazed everyone, and they praised God, saying, We have never seen anything like this. Amen. And the Lord will bless to us the reading of his word.

Tony Campolo was a very well-known American preacher, and he tells a story about being in a church in Oregon, where he was asked to pray for a man who had cancer.
He prayed boldly for the man's healing, and the next week he got a telephone call from the man's wife, and she said, You prayed for my husband. He had cancer.
Campolo was encouraged. He thought in his heart, because she used the past tense, that must mean that the man has been healed. But before he could think much more about it, the lady announced that her husband had died.
Campolo, of course, felt terrible. But she continued, Don't feel bad. When he came into that church that Sunday, he was filled with anger.
[3:30] He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up.

He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew toward God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him.
It was an awful thing to be in his presence. But she went on, And then she said, And then she said, And then she said something incredibly profound to him.
She said, He wasn't cured, but he was healed. He wasn't cured, but he was healed. Healing is more than just restoration from physical disease or illness.
Healing is, in fact, much more than that in the Bible. Healing is what the Bible refers to as wholeness. It is about somebody coming into shalom with God.

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[5:02] Complete soundness and peace. Indeed, the Greek word sozo, which is used to describe the word salvation in English, sozo refers literally to cleansing or healing.

So Jesus, when we say that Jesus is our Savior, we say he is our healer. He is our cleanser from all sin.
And so it means much more, to be healed means much more than just having your physical ailments rectified. If you think about the New Testament examples of healing, like the one of the paralytic here, every one of those people that Jesus healed of a particular disease died of something else.
Did you know that? They all died of something else. So they weren't really healed physically, certainly not for any long period of time.
Their physical restoration was limited until another illness took them. Yet they were healed, thoroughly healed, healed for eternity because of their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.
[6:23] Healing encompasses the entire human experience, the human body, the human mind, the human emotions, and crucially, the human soul for all eternity.

So, when we think about healing, we think about healing in the fall. How come we need healing in the first place? What is required for healing?
Well, according to the Bible, the root cause of sickness, and all disease, is sin. All of us are born with sin.
It's the great human flaw that we all have. It's much more destructive than any genetic disease we have, but then ultimately all disease is a result of sin. Sin separates us from God.
When God created the world, prior to Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden, the world was very good. Not perfect, because there was a devil there, but it was very good.
[7:30] And the clear thing that the Bible teaches us, that there was no sin or sickness or death, until the devil came and tempted the woman and then the man into sin, and they fell.

And God did something significant in that moment. He cursed the earth. He didn't just curse those who sinned. He cursed everything around them.
And they felt, and we still feel, the effects of that curse. The curse was on not only human beings, but it was on nature, and it was on the earth, and the very atmosphere we breathe.
Everything was cursed. It became a fallen world, in which sickness and pain and death became a reality, but not only so. A world in which genetic diseases became a reality.
A world in which natural disasters became a possibility. A world where not only humans were against humans, but animals were terrified of humans, and enmity came between them.
[8:37] A world in which a husband and a wife could no longer get on so easily than they did before. I will put enmity between you, was also, your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall reign or rule over you.

Literally, he shall keep you under his heel. Why? Because you ladies might want to rise up, and get a bit gnarky and difficult.
But also, because some men are terribly unreasonable. Aren't they ladies? Come on, don't just ooh, say yeah. And we get irritated and angry with one another, and then we begin to lash out.
These are all consequences of human sin, you see. And it affected at every level, at the most intimate level of a husband-wife relationship, but globally, sin has brought about a curse upon the earth.
And the writer of the Romans says, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned, physical mortality and suffering are the general consequences of living in a fallen creation.
[10:00] The world needs healing. And God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but shall have eternal life.

Not only the world of men will be healed by the cross of Christ, but the world of creation will be healed and restored as well, when he returns to put all things right.
So physical illness and weakness in general are down to sin. And sometimes they are down to a person's individual sin.
So in John chapter 5, there is a paralyzed man who is 38 years by a pool waiting for a miracle to happen in his life, and Jesus asks him or speaks to him and says to him, take heart, son, your sins are forgiven you.

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Your sins are forgiven you. Sorry, that's not John 5, that's Matthew 9. And then this reading we had here, the paralytic, your sins are forgiven you.
[11:11] And people say, well, is that a specific sin? It's likely to be the case that there was a specific reason because of what he had done in his life that led to this paralysis and led him into this difficulty and he heard the words, your sins are forgiven, and that was the most important thing he heard, even though he was physically made well.

The whole point of Mark 2 is Jesus saying, look, does the Son of Man have power on earth to forgive sins? And he said, son, your sins are forgiven. They say, you can't do that, you're not God. You say, well, if I can, you've got to re-evaluate what you think of me.
And so this man, because of personal sin, had become unwell, had become ill, led to a paralysis, and eventually he needed his sins forgiven and his paralysis was healed.
But not all sin is a result of personal, not all sickness, rather, is a result of personal sin. We've got a whole book in the Bible, the book of Job, which was written to kind of take away the idea that every time something bad happened in a person's life, it must have been because they've done something wrong.
That's the whole point of the book of Job. Job was a righteous man, perfect in all his ways, and yet terrible calamity happened to him. And his friends came along and said, well, that's because you've sinned.
[12:31] And Job says, no, no, it's not. And more importantly, God said it wasn't. There was a reason beyond that explanation where he was tested by the devil and he stood up for God against all of the odds and showed what a righteous man could do who had true faith in God.

He could hold on in the midst of terrible calamities and storms in his life. But his sickness, his boils, they were not because he had sinned. So not everybody who gets unwell has sinned.
Not in that personal sense. That's not the specific reason for it. Of course, we all sin. And indeed, in John 9, Jesus is asked a question. Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?
And that was their thinking. It must have been one or the other. He was perhaps born out of wedlock and so that was a bit of an embarrassment and a shame to everybody in the society. And so when he was, it was discovered that he was blind, it was said, well, somebody did wrong.
And he had this all of his life. Imagine, he's walking around and his neighbors are looking at him and they're thinking, oh, well, we all know what happened there. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink. He was an object of shame and social isolation because of his blind condition.
[13:55] Who sinned then? Whose fault is it all? We're good at looking for faults. Jesus said, neither. But this is for the glory of God. This is not a judgment that you should make.

You are not equipped to make that judgment. Oh, well, we know why they're suffering. It's because of this. We don't always know why they're suffering. It may be obvious to point out when perhaps somebody is an addict of some kind and they're suffering, they say, well, that's the reason.
Of course, that's obvious to say. But never forget that there's a reason for that too. somebody may have sinned, but we cannot always make that easy judgment.
And sometimes, sickness is a result of spiritual and demonic attacks. There is in the Bible the Gerasian demoniac who Jesus drove out the demons from, who was tormented and used to cut himself because of that spiritual and demonic attack.
In Luke 13, there is a woman, a daughter of Abraham, who Jesus says, Satan has kept bound for 18 long years. And she needs to be set free.
[15:12] So there may be people here who have experienced that in their lives and they know that their suffering has been the result of some evil that was afflicted them which they have been thankfully delivered from.

All are possible. But in this world, sickness is redemptive. It is redemptive because if we trust in God and we go to Him for healing, we can be set free from it.
We might suffer the consequences of our sinful behaviors but God can deliver us from them all. Take heart, son. Your sins are forgiven you. So that's healing in the fall. And then healing in sickness. Let's think about that word sickness for a moment.
The word sickness covers a multitude of ailments in the Bible. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, it covers fevers, emotional distresses, methods of paralysis, epilepsy, blindness, fevers, and dysentery.

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[16:28] And the English word translates six Hebrew words and nine Greek words. And it's used many, many times throughout the Bible but not as much as the word death because the wages of sin is death.

Sickness leads to death death. And death is the result of sickness. Take for example the word leprosy in the Bible. Leprosy was something that Miriam and Naaman suffered.
It was one of those illnesses that if you got it meant you were physically removed from your society, from your family and you were isolated in leper colonies. And if you walked around the streets you had to ring a bell and say unclean, unclean so that everybody would get out of your way.
In the Bible the word leprosy covers lots of skin conditions. Eczema, ringworm, fungal infections and rashes. Leprosy is not the Hansen's disease that we see in the developing world.
It was a whole range of things. And it required purification. If somebody was cleansed of their leprosy it required the priest to sign them off as it were so they could re-enter in society.
[17:45] Leprosy separated people. So sickness covers a whole range of things. But interestingly there's a Greek word asthenia and asthenia covers what we might now refer to as mental or emotional illnesses.

So if you have asthenia it's a British in English medical term it refers to muscle weakness lack of energy severe fatigue covers a whole range of diseases that modern psychiatry might describe as mental or emotional illnesses.
My point is that the word disease or illness or sickness in the Bible covers the whole range of human experience. Sometimes we say well you know I have chronic fatigue syndrome I think that's what they call it now the old Emmy I have that it's not really an illness like their disease or their disability yes it is biblically speaking I have mental health problems I have depression that's not like a physical disease but it's still a disease and it still requires healing.
Indeed the apostle Paul had asthenia he talked about it as a thorn in the flesh he called it a weakness that he asked God to take from him now we don't know exactly what it was but clearly it could have been something that was mental not physical something that tormented him we simply don't know the point is he heard God say to him my grace is sufficient for you my power is made perfect in your what in your asthenia in your weakness you are going to have to bear this this is part of your constitution part of your makeup what we might say that's just the way I am but it's a disease that you carry and it's one that can be healed in Romans 8 28 our frailty and weakness is linked to our praying we don't know how to pray as we ought we have an asthenia we have a weakness of frailty that kind of prevent us being the kind of people we want to be in the presence of God and then we're told the spirit helps us what in our weaknesses you're aware of your weaknesses your frailty your mind runs all over the place maybe you have anxiety or fear when you pray and you're aware of that weakness the spirit helps you then you need healing and healing comes in the form of help and interestingly as well healing may be as it were a zap suddenly your anxiety is gone or it may be that your anxiety is just lifted for that moment it may come back again and then you pray for healing holy spirit help me with my weakness is a prayer for healing you see it's a comprehensive term you think through the bible king david he had deep sorrow mental exhaustion and dark despair in psalm 42 he says i'm like a deer in the desert i'm so desperate god heal me elijah had severe fatigue reactive depression hopelessness and isolation i want to die he said i've given up and god says to him what are you doing here elijah go back where you came yeah i know you're weak i know you're broken take some rest i'll feed you then go back the way you came job and his immense physical suffering his psychological trauma king saul and his demoniac oppression all of these required healing whether they were mental physical emotional or spiritual needs so then we come to healing then and wholeness in first thessalonians 5 22 23 it says may god himself the god of peace sanctify you through and through may your whole spirit soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our lord jesus christ what does that tell us well it tells us that we're made up of three parts soul spirit body we are not just physical and we are not just spiritual we are not just emotional we are spirit we are soul we are body and he says may you be kept blameless may you be sanctified in other words may you may be made clean may your whole body soul and spirit be made clean see when you come to a place like this a place of worship you might
I mean it's not kind of the thing we do nowadays but in the old days you know people used to talk about dressing up having their sunday best you remember that you had your sunday best you had to look good for church the problem with that of course is that you might look good on the outside but what are you like on the inside that's what really matters your spirit your soul your body needs to

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be made clean it isn't enough just to look good just to look religious we need transformation from the inside and healing involves all of those and it keeps involving all those because we need to be kept blameless we need to be kept cleansed by the blood of Jesus so you take John 5 as an example the paralyzed man 38 years he was paralyzed he was by that pool he was desperate to be made well and Jesus said to him do you want to be made whole now the man undoubtedly thought yeah I want to walk again that wasn't the question
[23:59] Jesus was asking do you want me to fix what is broken do you want me to put right what is wrong do you want me to cleanse you on the inside do you want me to put you right on the outside do you want to be made whole Jesus makes us whole not just well again but whole not just physically well but spiritually well and Jesus removes from us the wounds and the scars and the damage that is done through spiritual paralysis the word he uses gives us the English word hygiene do you want personal hygiene well I hope you do but actually you desperately do you need all of the whiff and smell and damage of sin to be removed from your life to be made well or take the man born blind in

John chapter 9 we've already mentioned him who was sinned this man or his parents what was he suffering from he was suffering from blindness yes but he was suffering from social isolation because people passed by when he came up their street he was a beggar so they despised him he wasn't educated!
so the religious people looked down on him! and because he was born blind they doubly looked down on him he was spiritually isolated as well and when he was healed and he began to explain who had done it and why they said to him you're steeped in sin what can we learn from you and Jesus said I'm going to heal this man because God's going to be glorified through him and what does Jesus do to heal him he says something first of all when he asked the question who was born blind who sinned this man or his parents said he should be born blind Jesus said neither this is for the glory of God then Jesus said while I am in the world I am the light of the world so he said something I am the light of the world this man is in darkness I am the light of the world then he did something he spat on the ground he made clay and he put it on the man's eyes why did he do that well in
Genesis chapter 1 the first thing God spoke into this dark chaotic world was these words let there be light I am the light of the world and then he created man from the mud from the dust of the world and he recreated this man by making mud and putting it on his eyes to link our healing to the spiritual sight that Jesus brings into this world when Jesus heals us he recreates life in us he rebirths us he gives us wholeness he repairs our brokenness he restores us to what God intended Adam and Eve to be in the garden healing brings us into fellowship with God it restores us to community the man had been isolated it gives us identity the man was shamed and blind now he's a follower of
Jesus and this is why Tyler Statton says there is a healing after the healing again and he says look you stopped you can see stop sinning so that nothing worse happens to you and then the man says I want to believe in you I want to follow you who are you Lord and he says I am the son of man and he falls on his knees and he worships because his spiritual eyes are open to the reality of God with him in his flesh that's healing physical emotional mental crucially spiritual and that's so important for us to grasp you see this man was traumatized by the world in which he lives sin traumatizes us trauma is not just being wounded it's the story that arises from living wounded trauma is what you tell yourself you are like because you've been damaged by sin either your own or somebody else's trauma makes you feel bad because somebody hurt you and made you feel bad trauma makes you feel dirty because somebody abused you in some way and made you feel that you were deserving of it trauma trauma trauma and we carry it around in our muscle memory and in our minds and it continues to follow us around and it keeps us down
[29:13] Jesus has come to heal us from our trauma trauma is not just being wounded it's the story that you tell yourself what Tyler Stanton calls the wordless story that you keep telling yourself as you beat yourself up and keep yourself down Jesus wants to keep you and rescue you and free you from your trauma really important that we learn that so we don't carry the baggage of our past around with us while we walk with Jesus our eyes are open but another example in the Bible maybe we need to have to keep looking to see clearly so healing goes beyond the physical to the healing of the deep scars and wounds that have traumatized us emotionally psychologically and spiritually and then this will the pain suffering and needs that intrude on our own stories harden our hearts or

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will they soften our souls how does the very pain that is eating us alive become an agent of deep transformation we have to invite

God the very one who broke our trust into the muck with us we invite the one we are labeling perpetrator to be our healer it's the most courageous of all choices and his point here is that for some of you for some of us there is a danger that we blame God for our trauma we say well God could have healed me and he hasn't why is he not done and therefore I cannot trust God but C.S. Lewis once said God shouts at us in our pain because sometimes it takes trauma it takes sickness it takes pain it even takes death to get our attention or we will live in this dangerous world without him and die without him there is something worse than sickness and disease and even death death there is dying without salvation without God and without hope in this world so healing in the church we believe in healing we believe in physical healing we pray for those who are sick we believe in spiritual healing we pray for those who need salvation we believe in emotional healing we pray for those who are scarred and wounded by their past life and experience by their trauma we pray for psychological healing where people struggle with mental illnesses and desperately need our prayers and our support and our help we do not judge anyone for we are all sick and we all need a doctor
Dr. Jesus and we bring Dr. Jesus into your life Jesus said I didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance just as the sick need a doctor so you need me we bring Jesus into your life and we pray that God will make you whole listen the Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit he heals the broken hearted and he binds up their wounds so will you let God heal you today do you want to get better will you let him change your heaviness for joy to heal your broken heart will you let him replace the oil of mourning for the garment of prayers will you let him remove from you your bitterness for the past events in your life that have hindered and will you allow him to replace it with the joy of the present will you invite God into your pain into your darkness and spend some time lamenting with him that it ever had to happen and then praying that he will heal cleanse and fix you again only God can heal you only God can do that
I can't do that nobody here can do that only God can do that we can pray for you we can't heal you will you then bring your brokenness to him but then will you crucially remember that the most important thing you need is not your physical healing that will only be for a time what you need is Jesus the healer of your soul for that will be for eternity can the worship group come back please we're going to sing a song and then we're going to have a moment of response in a time of prayer I'm going to invite you as we sing to stand and as you're singing if you feel able to and it's only a gesture it's not important but if you want to you might want to open your hands you don't have to raise them high you can just open them at your lap but the crucial thing is that if you are asking [35:13] God for healing today whether it be physical emotional spiritual or psychological open your hands to receive it from Jesus let us lift our hearts and our minds even our words to Jesus Father in the name of Jesus we open our hearts to you we bring you our sickness our weakness our fears our disappointments and our pain we confess that we cannot heal ourselves but we believe that you are the God who heals restores and makes all things new Lord Jesus open our eyes to your presence let faith rise in this place let hope awaken in every heart let your peace rule where there has been turmoil and yet your love drive out fear above all else draw us closer to yourself may we know not only your healing power but also the joy of your salvation and the comfort of your presence

Holy Spirit come and minister among us touch those who need physical healing comfort those who are grieving restore those who are weary set free those who feel bound by fear by shame by guilt by anxiety by depression by past wounds by trauma oh god in your mercy hear our prayer oh god we surrender ourselves completely to you and ask that your will may be done among us today and every day in jesus name amen

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