

## Epiphany 5

Mark 1:29-39 When All Else Fails, Where Should We Turn?

February 4-6, 2010 by: Pastor Wessel

Mark 1:29-39 – <sup>29</sup> *As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*

<sup>32</sup> *That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

<sup>35</sup> *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*

<sup>38</sup> *Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."*

<sup>39</sup> *So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

### **When All Else Fails, Where Should You Turn?**

#### **I. Because all else fails, turn to Jesus!**

#### **II. Because Jesus succeeds, turn to Jesus!**

#### **I. Because all else fails, turn to Jesus!**

*"If you don't have your health, you don't have anything."* Have you said that or heard other people say it? We live in a culture that is very concerned about people's health. We know that if a person is not healthy, they can't function. If you have back problems, you might not be able to perform your duties at work. If you have the flu, you need to stay away from people so that you don't make others sick. You take medicine of all kinds, for blood sugar, blood pressure, stomach problems, headaches, and a whole bunch of other things. We appreciate doctors who seem like they understand what is going on with our bodies and can recommend some valuable treatment. We appreciate nurses and others in clinics who show compassion and make our health and well being their top priority.

This section of God's Word makes me think about the many people I've spent time with when they have had serious health problems, everything from strokes to hip replacements, from cancer to broken bones. Few things make people realize how fragile life is and how weak they are like health problems do.

Sometimes these health problems really put up a wall in people's minds when it comes to their trust in God. The reality of sickness and disease makes people question whether or not God really cares about the people he created. When we realize how weak and feeble our bodies can be, our perfect, all mighty, all knowing God can seem like he is very far away, in a place where he doesn't have to deal with the painful realities that you and I face all the time.

But even though these painful times can be a wall that prevents us from seeing God, these same health problems can also serve an important purpose in our lives. We often include the thought in our prayers that God is able to transform even sickness and disease into a blessing for his children. The Holy Spirit, with his amazing power and mercy, is able to use those very same problems in our lives to help us realize how much we actually need our Savior, who is so much stronger than we are. *Because* everything else in our life fails us, we should turn to Jesus!

We see that especially in Jesus' early ministry in the region of Galilee. Jesus had been baptized by John to begin his ministry. He went around and preached and taught people about the kingdom of God, enlisting the help of his specially chosen disciples. When Jesus was at the home of Simon Peter and Andrew, they told him that Peter's mother was lying in bed with a fever. He took her by the hand and helped her out of bed and her fever was gone. Everyone came to his door so he could heal them. When they couldn't find him, they went looking for him so that he could show them compassion. Whatever they had tried to do to alleviate their own pain and suffering, it wasn't working. But they trusted that Jesus could do it for them.

Whose power do we trust in today? Research scientists study the inner workings of the human body and experiment with different treatments to fight disease, to improve health, fix broken bodies. The research goes on day after day and millions of dollars are spent, sometimes with great success as the mysteries of the human body are unraveled and the puzzles about how disease works are solved.

The knowledge that comes from this research is then passed on to doctors and nurses through their schooling and at their work at clinics and hospitals. They are the front line soldiers who make decisions every day about how to treat each and every person. And often doctors have great success applying their knowledge to our hurting bodies.

So, whose power do we trust? Does any scientist or doctor provide a permanent solution? No. And, to be fair, when Jesus healed these sick and demon possessed, his healing was not a permanent solution for every problem. We are never told that Jesus gave these people perfect bodies, just that they were cured of their particular problem, whether it was

blindness or crippling skeletal problems or the tormenting of an evil demon. The people still lived in this world and so we can safely assume that they still got sick and grew old and weak and eventually died. But the miracles he performed still showed his power.

So, whose power do we trust? We trust in doctors and scientists as far as we are able, but we dare not put them in the place of God. God promises that he will be with you no matter what sickness you have, no matter what pain you are feeling. But he does not promise that he will always take away your sickness and pain here on earth.

We pray in the Lord's Prayer: *Deliver us from evil*. In that short prayer, we ask God to show us his mercy, to have compassion on us in our desperate times. But God's compassion and mercy may not come to us the way we always have in mind. He may show compassion by sending an extra measure of his Holy Spirit, to help you trust more in your Savior, who is strong, even when you are weak. God may show compassion by using the painful situation you find yourself in to remind you that his everlasting blessings are greater than the blessing of good health. God may use you as an shining example to others of how someone holds onto their faith even when you are struggling with pain and sickness and maybe even can still have a good sense of humor about it. Or, we pray, God will deliver you from evil by chasing away the pain you feel, if not immediately, then in the near future.

The evil one, the devil, causes and uses misery to drive us away from God; God uses it to humble us so that we realize our weakness and helplessness. Then he lifts us up again by reminding us of Jesus Christ. Our Savior carried the painful weight of all the world's sickness and disease on his shoulders. He suffered with it on the cross and there he set us free, so that no matter what pain we feel, we know that one day it will be gone forever.

## II. Because Jesus succeeds, turn to Jesus!

What we want to see especially from God's Word today is that Jesus was able to show people compassion in a way that only he could. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 4, we hear how he went into the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth and read from the prophet Isaiah:

<sup>18</sup> *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, <sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

<sup>20</sup> *Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, <sup>21</sup> and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Even though the promise of God from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah really emphasized God's spiritual blessings for the people, we see how Jesus' miracles showed that even the sickness and diseases that we face are no match for God's Son.

Because Jesus succeeded where everyone else has failed, it makes sense to turn to him again and again. Jesus succeeded, so Peter's wife's mother immediately looked for an opportunity to say thank you. Her fever was completely gone, she felt good and began offering her hospitality to her son in law and his guests.

Because Jesus defeated sickness again and again, people came to him again and again. He was eager to show them who he was. He wanted them to know God's compassion. He wanted them to know that God cares, not just about their health, but about their sin sick lives which had turned away from God and were lost and without him, had no hope for joyful life here or after death. Some didn't think they needed more than healing for their bodies. Some only wanted a healer for the day to day ills of life.

What we want to celebrate again and again is the success Jesus had over all the horrible evil that human rebellion brings into the world. But at times, might we see Jesus as a failure? Do we expect him to do things for us that he hasn't promised to do for us? Do we think he should guide us down an easier path? Or do we ever take him only when we need him – as a last resort – and then when he gives what we need, then we forget about him? Kind of like the fire extinguisher that says, "In case of emergency, break glass"? Do we forget that we should go to him in every situation, not only when we have problems, but because we have blessings that can only come from him? Do we forget that it is only because God preserves and protects our lives that we aren't constantly facing problems all the time?

It takes the Holy Spirit and the gift of faith to see that every attempt we make to solve the problems of our lives is really a failure if we leave our Savior out of the picture. It takes the gift of the Holy Spirit to see that Jesus is the first and only resort in our lives. The very strength, wisdom and knowledge that we or anyone else has comes because Jesus your Savior has succeeded when you and I have failed. It only makes sense to turn to him again and again.

**Conclusion** – Which statement have you heard more often? 1. It's easy to be a Christian when things are going well, when you have success, and you have nothing to worry about. Or 2. Christianity is only for people who are weak and poor who need to find hope in something, even if their lives never get better. It's not really for those who have made it in life.

I've hear both accusations. The statements are almost the direct opposite of each other. It reminds us that both riches and poverty can either be a temptation or a blessing. So also both health and sickness can be a temptation and a

blessing. It makes me wonder: Would the people in Galilee have paid attention to Jesus if they were not hurting? Some yes, some no. The Holy Spirit works in all kinds of different situations to change people's hearts and help them see their need to be saved by God. When you see Jesus as the one who succeeded where every one and everything else fails, see Jesus as the one to praise and thank and serve, no matter how good or terrible your situation in life is.