

Time of Grace Ministry
Jesus is Lord: Over Disease
March 7, 2010
Luke 4: 38-44

Have you ever had a really bad fever? Everybody's looking for answers and hope. I want to help people find it in God. And his amazing grace.

Have you been really sick lately? And if you have, when was the last time you had a really bad fever? You know, of all the different ways to get sick, nobody likes any of them, but frankly, for me, fever's the worst. You just never get any rest, you just can't get comfortable. During the day you feel so draggy, weak as a puppy, your head's pounding, you just feel uncomfortable, muscles aching. Trying to sleep doesn't bring you any relief, either. The nights are the worst when you've got a fever, aren't they? Your head's burning up, just sizzling, eating aspirin like candy, got a cold rag on your head and you just can't sleep because your muscles ache and you haven't done enough physical activity to really be tired so your mind is racing. Then, for me, comes the worst part – the fever dreams. You're kind of half asleep and you have these horrible, fever-induced nightmares. You wake up in the middle of the night, worse than before. The bottom half of you is shaking with the chills and the upper half of you is sizzling and burning up. I just hate fevers more than about anything else I know.

One of the most amazing stories in all of Scripture is something that Jesus did for a woman who had a fever. And to me, it really resonates because of my own dread of fevers. I was actually suffering from a UTI one time. Now, you know, men are not supposed to get those. I had somehow gotten the idea that this was a female thing. But my wife, Carol, actually had to drag me to the hospital. I could barely get out of the car. I was weak to the point of collapsing. They loaded me on a gurney and I was chattering with the chills so badly, I almost shook myself right off the gurney. They had to strap me down. It turned out I was dehydrated and they loaded me up with IV fluids and somehow got my temp down. But it looked really bad for a while because I was just burning up.

Actually, fever can be your friend if it's at lower degrees or near the 98.6 temperature that the human body works at. At lower degrees, the fever is working for you because it creates this kind of condition in your body that makes it inhospitable for bacteria and viruses. When that fever gets up though, past 105, if you get into the 105, 106, 107 range, you are risking tissue damage and worst of all, brain damage. If your temp gets 104 and above, you need a doctor's care really soon. It could be fatal.

Well, that brings me back to my story about Jesus' healing of a woman with a fever. Jesus was up near what had become his new base. Born in Bethlehem, he was raised in Nazareth, but he spent most of his ministry time in the city of Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, near the city of Bethsaida, where Peter and Andrew were from. Bethsaida also happened to be the home of Mrs. Simon Peter. Did you know that at least some of the apostles, disciples, were married? Peter had a wife and we know that because he had a mother-in-law. You can't have a mother-in-law unless you have a wife. They must have all lived at Peter's house, or at least she was staying there. I'm glad that the poor woman, who was very, very ill, had somebody to be with her.

There's only one thing worse than having a fever and that's having a fever alone and there's not even anybody to ask, "Could you get me some ice?" There's nobody there to hear you whimper and to bring you soda crackers and to put a cold cloth on your head. At least she was sick with people nearby. This wasn't a little fever. This was a bad fever. The story is found in your Bible in the gospel of St. Luke, St. Luke the physician, in chapter 4, verse 38.

It's late on a Saturday, it's like the Sabbath afternoon. Luke 4:38 says, "Jesus left the synagogue," he had been to church, and "he went to the home of Simon." Now, Bethsaida is not that far away from Capernaum, so probably just a little bit of a walk for him. "Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever." This is not the good fever. This is the one that can do some damage and it was going on and on and they were all very worried about her. It's not just, "Oh, mom will be okay. She just needs to get some rest." This is when you're starting to worry. She's not feeling warm, this is when she's feeling really hot. "And they asked Jesus to help her." This is kind of sweet. "So he bent over her," you know, Dr. Luke notices things like that because that's what a physician would do. You get up close to your patient and you look at them very carefully so you can observe their symptoms. Dr. Jesus bent over but he didn't administer any drugs, he didn't pull out any kind of surgical instruments or do any kind of thing. He didn't go looking at her tonsils or do all kinds of palpitations and check all over, looking for this or that kind of problem. He just leaned over her and this is one of my favorite expressions right here: "He rebuked the fever," since this was a bad fever. This wasn't the helpful kind, this was a bad fever.

Isn't that a cool phrase? "He rebuked the fever." Bad fever! You are a bad, bad fever! You're doing bad things to someone I care about. He scolded it and then he said, "Get out." It was like an Arnold Schwarzenegger moment like, "Get out." "He rebuked the fever and it left her." He just talked. There is such power in his words that he can talk to things in the human body at a molecular level. Are you not in awe of that? He was able to see whether this was a bacterial or viral problem. He could see all that was going on and his control over the universe is so great that with his mind and will expressed through his voice, he could rearrange something inside of her at the molecular level, whatever it was, that was causing her temperature to spike past the danger point.

That's whom we worship. That's your Lord Jesus. He is Lord over disease. And I know fever doesn't rank up there with leprosy and some of the other incredible healing things that Jesus did, but I'll tell you what, this was a miserable woman and Jesus cared about her. He rebuked the disease and it fled! "She got up at once" and you could tell how she was feeling. She wasn't like me when I finally stopped shaking on that gurney at St. Mary's hospital. She jumped up and said, "Anybody hungry?" She was doing what women just love to do, show hospitality. Jesus was a guest in her home, or at least in her son-in-law's home. She wanted to make herself useful.

"When the sun was setting," the Sabbath is now over. At 6:00 p.m. you could start working again. And so, people started "Bringing to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness," and he not only could do fevers, he could do everything. "He laid his hands on each one," on every one. He didn't say, "No, you're too far gone. Sorry. Nope, can't help you. You'll be fine, just take some aspirin and see me in the morning." Every one got a touch from the Lord Jesus. "And he

healed them. Moreover,” then this talks about some demon possessions, too. “Demons came out of many people, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them, too, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.” Ironically, the demons from hell were able to pick up on Jesus’ identity more than most of the people who got to watch him work. But Jesus did not want just anybody explaining his identity and purpose, especially those who came from hell. He told them to be quiet and he cast them out and they were not able to torment those individuals anymore.

“At daybreak” he retreated from the people. He wanted to go away for prayer to a “solitary place,” verse 42. “The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.” They thought, “Man! We’ve got a magic healer here. Nobody will ever be sick again. We have heaven on earth.” And Jesus said, “Nope, let go of me.” He said, “I must preach,” proclaim, “the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that’s why I was sent. And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”

So ask yourself, why did Jesus do that? Why did he take a high fever away from this woman? It wasn’t to take the first step in abolishing fever from the face of the earth. Plenty of people had high fevers at that time and in the years afterward and they still do today. If Jesus had come to remove fever as a condition of our earthly life, well, then he had failed. But see, that really wasn’t his ultimate mission, to bring heaven on earth. It was just the reverse, to take us out of this earth to heaven. The way God chooses to look at things, the earth is too badly broken to be saved right now. And his goal is to get us out of here and take us home to himself. What he really came to do was to build faith in himself because it’s only through the Lord Jesus that you and I have a hope of getting out of here to the new home that he’s building.

That brings us to the question of our own sicknesses. Why are we still sick? The Lord sometimes will come and do things for us just like what he did for Peter’s mother-in-law. Sometimes he brings healing to you and me, too, but not as the first steps towards getting rid of human suffering on this earth. This world is full of a lot of tribulation and sorrow. But Jesus directs us to trust and believe in him. There we find forgiveness of all our sins and the promise of life everlasting. God’s ultimate goal is described in the book of Revelation, way at the end in chapter 22. He said, “In heaven the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations.” You are going to love being ultimately healed by Jesus when you get to step into his world in heaven. There you will feel good and jump up, eager to serve him, just as Peter’s mother-in-law jumped up eager to bring food for the people who were in the room with her.

Now, what Jesus, by healing like this, wants to demonstrate to you is how much he loves you and to show his compassion for you. The very first reason why he healed that woman of fever is because it hurt his heart to see her suffering like that. And the same Jesus that looked at her that way, loves you no less. When you’re struggling, when you suffer, he hurts, too. And you can call on that Savior to do for you things that you know he is able to do. When you call on Jesus, you may call on him as a forgiven saint, not a convicted, condemned wretch that he might enjoy watching burn up and tremble and shake with the chills. He takes no pleasure out of your pain. When you hurt, he hurts, and he shows you that in the story today.

Secondly, he shows you his power. There are no limits to what he can do. Anybody who can scold a fever and rebuke it – “Bad fever, get out of her!” – he can do anything he wants for you, too. He can rearrange the molecular infrastructure in your body any way he wants. No shock. He built it, he can do maintenance on it. So never flinch from calling on the Lord to do things that you need, for there are no limits to his capacity to rearrange your insides towards health and away from illness.

Thirdly, one of the reasons he did that healing was to reinforce his message. In fact, that may be the biggest thing of all, for there are many people whose illnesses are not healed on this earth. There are people who’ve been hauling out their needles to load up with insulin and inject themselves because of their terrible diabetes day after day after day. But the greatest thing the Lord does is back up his words by showing his power. And even more important than having your body patched up is to have your soul connected to Jesus in faith. “I am coming here to announce that the Messiah, the King, is here.” King Jesus wants to rule over your heart and wants you to welcome him into it as king. He wants you to know he is the Savior promised in all the scriptures and he wants you to know that he came and did everything just the way that his Father had laid out for him to do. Even greater than the healings that he’s done for your body is the healing that he did for your soul. By dying on the cross for you, he paid the ultimate price so that words of forgiveness can be placed upon you, so that you can wear your halo – and I’m serious – that you may call yourself a “holy person,” holy through being washed in his blood. He gives it away, he gives it to you.

The miraculous acts that he did – he didn’t walk on water very often, did he? And he didn’t manufacture sandwiches out of a couple of loaves and he didn’t give everybody a fish meal, a fish fry, all the time. He did that only occasionally to support his greater gift, his message to you, “I am the One who died to forgive you. I am the One who has stenciled your name on a room in the heavenly mansions. I’m the One coming for you to take you home.” Still, having said all that, we depend on the Lord, our Healer, and he still is Dr. Jesus. He still is interested in how you are doing and even though his ultimate gift to you is to heal you once and for all, he still is interested in patching you up. And he does amazing things! And I want you to just notice more of what the Lord Jesus is doing in your life.

Now, it is true enough that the Lord Jesus chose at this time not to abolish all disease from the face of the earth, not to abolish all fevers. People still suffer. People have been getting sick for many, many centuries and still are today. But that should not blind us to the fact that God’s healing power is at work even today, even right now. For instance, when was the last time you had a cut? I have a cut on my thumb right now. It bleeds and then you wash it, you put some Neosporin on it and put a Band-Aid on it, and then it kind of throbs and you forget about it and then a day later, because of friction, the Band-Aid falls off and then you put another one on and then a day later the Band-Aid falls off again. Then you look and there’s this neat little red line that’s all sealed up tight. How did that happen? Think about it, why does your bleeding stop? Well, you say, the blood clotted. What made it clot? Why should blood clot? Why don’t you just leak it all out until you’re drained and then you die? What makes blood stay liquid inside of you but the minute air comes in contact with it, it clots? That God’s design and God’s healing.

Let me give you another example. Did you ever whack your finger with a hammer or really pound something on your nail and it turns about 18 different colors? What makes that just go away? I used to play racquetball and once I drilled my left leg, or actually, my partner drilled my left leg with one of those racquetballs and I took a picture of it because it was so spectacular. It was about 18 different colors. But it went away. It's because God designed me in such a way that the blood and other bodily tissues slowly wash away the debris that was left over and God mixed together that capillary system, that blood system, because he wants me to be feeling better.

So the point of all this is as we look around us at our lives, there are all kinds of daily miracles happening. But because God does them so often, we tend to think of them as ordinary, or not really very miraculous at all. When my second son was a little kid, he was standing on the sink in our bathroom and slipped off it by my negligence and whacked his mouth on the way down and smashed his teeth. We thought he was going to need major dental surgery. With the advice of our dentist, we let those teeth reemerge and they came back and were fine because God chose to do something wonderful for our dear boy.

Then there's another aspect of healing. Towards the end of the book of James, in Chapter 5, written ironically by Jesus' half-brother, there is a great invitation for you to seize an opportunity. God does choose to intervene in ways even greater than the healing he's built into your body and the healing that he gives you through people in the medical profession. At the end of the letter of James it says, "Is any one of you sick? He should call on the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him," or rub him or smear him, "with oil in the name of the Lord." Not that oil is magic or anything like that, but it was a common household remedy that they would often use. "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he's sinned, he 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 man is powerful and effective."

The Lord wants to use miracles of healing, what we might call "extraordinary miracles of healing," to boost people's faith. He works through faith to build faith. Praying for each other, praying not only for yourself but praying for each other and with each other really works. And God intervenes and does things he would not do if you hadn't prayed about it. "The prayer of righteous people," righteous through the blood of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, "is effective." That's not coming from me. That's a promise coming from God.

Let me just sort of sum this up. We really are going to be put all back together in heaven, but even now, God is doing things to make our lives more bearable because he loves us and cares about us. He builds miracles into our own bodies to help us heal ourselves. Let's really celebrate those daily miracles which we tend to think of as just ordinary 'getting better.' Secondly, he uses his helpers in the medical profession as his agents as he slowly unveils the secrets of the human body. Then you have that promise in James and other places in Scripture that give us the promise that prayer, on behalf of other people, invites God to intervene in their lives, and do things in an extraordinary way to make people better, to change their health, in order to draw their praises and their faith dedicated back to him.

I'd like to tell you the story of one example that I had in my own life. I went to visit an elderly man who was a member of the congregation. His name was Ed and Ed was in the hospital with some really serious heart trouble. He was probably in his 70s, still young, right? But his heart was doing very poorly and there wasn't much circulation. And you know what happens with bad circulation? Your blood starts to kind of puddle up and his extremities started swelling up and he looked terrible. I rushed over to see him but he was already so bad that his hands started to swell up and they started to look like angry red gloves and his neck started to swell up and it looked like an angry red tree trunk. And the poor guy's head, here's this slight, little, elderly man, with his head growing to what looked like the size of a basketball. He looked horrible. I was watching my friend, Ed, die. What made it worse was that his wife, Esther, was home, very disabled, very ill herself, and not able to care for herself as Ed was her main caregiver. I really thought I was going to say goodbye to him. I prayed to the Lord for healing, but basically I also said if it's your will, take him home. And I started to think about Scripture passages to use for his funeral.

I went home and I was waiting for the phone to ring from the hospital saying that he passed away. The phone never rang. The next day I called just to make sure and they said he's not in intensive care and I thought he died. And they said, "No, he's in a regular room." And I rushed back over and there he was looking great. All the swelling was gone. He was sitting up and talking comfortably. And I asked the people at the hospital, "What happened?" and they said, "We don't know. Not a one of us has any idea what started his blood circulating again." And he went home and was able to care for his wife and she did die first. He was able to bury her and then shortly after that, then he passed away, happy to be with his Savior and with his wife, Esther. So this is my promise and encouragement to you. Call on the Lord to use that great power on your behalf.

Final thoughts from Pastor Jeske:

I want to take a moment to thank all of you who responded and have gotten in contact with Time of Grace. It really does a lot for us. We thrive on your words of encouragement. We appreciate your support. And we also love your ideas that you send. We, of course, want to know what you like. We also want to listen to the things that you don't like and appreciate your suggestions and criticisms. But we also appreciate your suggestions for topics that matter to you so that I know what kind of messages you need to hear in the days to come.

I also want to take a moment to say goodbye now as we close out the 4th in the series that I've been presenting to you. This broadcast kind of wraps it up, that Jesus is Lord and we worship and praise him for that. He's Lord over sin, your sin. His forgiveness has conquered it. He's Lord over Satan, he's Lord over death and he's Lord over even the diseases that bog you and me down.

And with your permission, I'd like to know if I can pray for you, or pray for someone close to you, that is struggling right now. As you know, the Lord Jesus brings us healing through what we call ordinary healing in our body and through the medical field. But he also does intervene and do things because the children of God ask him in prayer.

Would you let me pray for you or for someone that you love?

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit, we come to you today in answer to your invitation in your Scriptures that the prayer of righteous people is powerful and effective and we are righteous through your blood, Lord Jesus, and we have access to your throne. And so, we humbly come before you now to claim the privilege that you've given to us.

We come today to ask for mercy. And in our hearts are people who are struggling, who are suffering, who are in pain, perhaps who are afraid or have to struggle and suffer alone, or have been told that their disease is terminal. Or perhaps it's a breadwinner whose family depends on that person's income.

Lord, there are people that you love and that we love who are struggling and suffering right now. Be there in your mercy. Be there with your tender, compassionate heart. Lord, we know that through your blood they've been washed clean of their sins and they are close to you and you care about them. And so, we pray and implore the tenderness of your heart.

We also pray for your wisdom. We know that you will do the right things. But we also come and implore that you will step into their lives with your mighty power and that you will be there for them to perform with the same kind of miraculous power that you showed in driving a fever out of the body of someone that we loved.

Lord, be there with your almighty power and bring the healing that they need. Bring the relief from their pain and give them hope. Above all, make it work towards your glory so that you might be praised through it. In Jesus' name we pray.

For Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mark Jeske reminding you that right now is your time of grace.

Journey into GOD'S GRACE

Guides for Personal Bible Study with Pastor Mark Jeske



Jesus Is Lord: Over Disease

SCRIPTURE VERSE

Luke 4: 38-44 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. ...The people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness...and he healed them....The people...tried to keep him from leaving them but he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom to other towns also, because that is why I was sent.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Jesus' many healing miracles displayed his great power and divinity.
- Jesus heals us today too, showing us his love and compassion, showing us his power, and reinforcing his message of salvation through faith.
- Even greater than the physical healing that God does for us is the healing he did for our souls.
- God works through prayer to intervene in people's lives, so he encourages us to pray.

IN SUMMARY

Jesus performed many healing miracles when he was on earth. With a word or a touch he displayed his almighty power. He did this, not to end human sickness, but to show his love and compassion. He also did these miracles to display his power and ability to beat death and Satan. Jesus still performs miracles today – through the amazing healing that our bodies can do for themselves, through medical science and professionals, and through prayer. God encourages us to pray for him to intervene in our lives and the lives of others.

FOR REFLECTION

Any and all requests made to our loving God will be heard and it is good to seek his power and strength to help us overcome our sickness. But what happens when healing is not granted or a loved one dies? Does this mean we have failed, or that God has no compassion? Even Jesus prayed that the cup of sorrow be taken from him, knowing all that was to lie ahead for him on Good Friday, if it was God's will. But God said no, this is my plan and we're sticking to it. Remember, God's plan, his way, is always best, despite our lack of understanding. May God's will always be done, and no matter what, we win.