

5th S. after the Epiphany 2/7/21
Mark 1:29-39 B

And immediately He left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

We seem to getting far better with the interactive sermon, so again this morning, I thought I would begin with a question. But, I decided there really wasn't any need to because it would be a redundant question, meaning the answer is "Ya sure, you betcha!"

Now you do want to know what the question was, right? OK, here goes: Who of you has never been sick? The answer is "Da, we've all been sick." Whether it's the common cold, or Covid, a life-threatening illness, or struggling with a debilitating disease every day, each and everyone of us knows what it's like to be sick.

So, we can relate to Peter's mother-in-law in our lesson. Illness, sickness, disease not only rob us of strength and energy, they frustrate us, wear out our patience, and leave us in agreement with the old saying, "When you have your health, you have everything." The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus has appeared to deliver us from all illness and disease of body, especially death.

Today's Gospel continues where last week's Gospel left off. Last week, Jesus delivered the man from demon-possession in the synagogue in Capernaum. He taught and the people were amazed at His authority. "And immediately," the Evangelist tells us, "He left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John."

“And immediately they told Him” about Peter’s mother-in-law, so sick with fever that she was unable to get out of bed. Jesus “took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her.” Immediately, the woman was perfectly healthy in every way. We know how healthy she was because immediately began to serve the guests in the house.

This woman’s fever was a somber reminder of the warning God gave to Adam, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen 2). Every illness, injury, every ache and pain, every death bed and death is a reminder that there is sin in this world. These reminders of sin have been our lot ever since Adam and Eve ignored God’s warning and ate the forbidden fruit. Misery, pain, and death are a constant reminder that we daily sin much and “justly deserve [God’s] present and eternal punishment.”

And like Peter and his family, we are helpless. Yes, God, who opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing, gives us medicine and medical care. I want to be perfectly clear – medicine and medical care are part of the daily bread God gives us for our body and life. Yet, every medicine, every treatment, every bit of knowledge of the body God in His Almighty Providence gives us ... will fail us in the end.

Jesus Christ reversed the curse of sin for a time in this woman’s life. As He did so, He demonstrated the His overwhelming generosity and mercy. In this miracle, He showed His love for us poor sinners. He showed Himself to be the Son of God, “very God of very God,” by showing His power of sin.

And yet, the curse of sin was gone from Peter’s mother-in-law for a time. Have you ever thought about that: what became of Peter’s mother-in-

law and all those He healed who were sick with various diseases? What about Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain that He raised from the grave? Jesus healed them, breathed new life into their dead bodies and they returned to paying taxes, shoveling snow, aches and pains, the common cold, and death.

Physical healing – although it was part of Christ's ministry – was not the main reason the Son of God took on a human nature and came into this world. That would be like treating the symptoms of a disease while ignoring the underlying cause. Jesus came into this world to get at the root of the problem. He came to defeat sin and death, for as the Bible teaches, "the wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23). He did that by coming into this world in the flesh, born of human mother, taking all of our sin upon Himself and carrying them to Calvary's cross, where He died the death of our sin. The Prophet Isaiah says it this way,

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed (Is 53).

Like the fever that left Peter's mother-in-law immediately, our sins are gone immediately and forever in the cleansing blood of Jesus.

We have this certainty because Jesus was raised to life the 3rd day. The resurrection proves that God the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world. Christ's resurrection from the dead on the third day gives us the assurance that His cure is complete, perfect, and

abundant. There is nothing that we need to do because God has done it all.

I mentioned a moment ago that all the people Jesus healed and even those He raised from the dead ... eventually died. The salvation that God gives us in Jesus is quite different – It is for eternity.

The cross cures the fatal disease of sin. Jesus gives us the cure of the cross through the means of grace. The days for the Anvik family have been quite exciting, especially since August 21st, when God gave them the gift of a beautiful baby girl. Today, in the new birth of her baptism, Jazmine becomes God's own child. Her sins are forgiven, she is delivered from death and the devil; and she receives the free gift of eternal life. The victory of the cross becomes hers, just as it became your victory in your Baptism.

When you come to the Lord's Table, to eat His body and drink His blood, the forgiveness Jesus won on the cross becomes your forgiveness, and where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation. As you hear the absolution, "Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven," Jesus breathes His eternal life into you that you may live, and never die.

Rejoice and be glad: Jesus has a place in heaven reserved for you. He will come to take you from this great tribulation to Himself in heaven and He will wipe all the tears from your eyes.

I say this especially to those among us who grieve this day. We grieve because we love those who have died so very much, and miss them so, just as Jesus did Lazarus. We can rejoice that our loved ones who have departed this great tribulation loving Jesus rest from their labors in heaven.

We will see them. We will touch them. We will hold them. We have that certainty because of that glorious truth we confess in the Creed, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” The separation of the mortal body from the eternal soul, as we know it today, is very temporary. For us mortal beings who are bound by time, it may seem like forever. But for God, “one day is as a thousand years,” so it’s not long at all. The day is coming, when all who are in the grave will hear the voice of Jesus and – immediately – their bodies will be made alive again, 6-feet of North Dakota soil will be torn open and those bodies will be raised to be reunited with their eternal souls and immediately – body and soul together -- they will enjoy the eternal happiness of heaven. And, sickness, illness, pain, and death will have no dominion over us.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.