

The Healing Touch of Christ

Mark 1:29-39

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 18, 2024

Well good morning, everyone. If you would, let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer before we begin our time in the Word.

Heavenly Father, as we come to you this morning, we are interested in discussing the topic of healing. And finally, not just from this doctrinal perspective, although that's very important. This is a very personal subject for us because we have people in our congregation who need healing, and they're sick, or they're hurting, or their body is not what it's supposed to be. Lord, we also have people in our church who are healers, and it is their job to be doctors and nurses and health care workers who spend their whole day trying to help people whose bodies are hurting and not what they're supposed to be. And so, Lord, this is a topic that really touches all our lives. There's none of us who aren't sick at some point. And suffering is a part of this fallen, broken world. And so Lord, I pray You would help us to approach this subject from that angle as well, that we would think of it not just doctrinally, but also in the personal elements; and that You would give us grace to understand what it meant when we say that Christ healed people. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, in order to begin our sermon this morning, I want to do something I did with you last week, and that is to make a few statements and ask you to tell me if they're true or false. I won't do this every Sunday, but I think this will be helpful to do it one more time. So let's just dive on in here. Pain is real, true or false? True. Sickness is real. True. Pain and sicknesses are difficult? True, put an exclamation point on that one, right? They're debilitating. They're dangerous. They're earth shattering, life changing, devastating, and they can ruin your whole world in a single night. I think that one was so true. We don't even have to say it. Right? Those are pretty simple statements. I think we all understand that. That is the way it is in this world.

But let me make one more statement that I think is going to make you stop and think a little bit. God heals them today. When you think about that, I think a lot of us would say yes. But at the same time, there are a lot of questions that come up with that, right? Like, why does He heal some people and not others? And why does He ignore my prayers for healing and those types of things? And let me just say before you say "no, God doesn't heal," I want to tell you that has happened before. God has done this in the past. In order to show you that, just open your Bibles with me to the Gospel of Mark. That's the book we're in today. We're going to be looking at a time when the Lord Jesus healed someone.

And I know we have boys and girls here this morning, and they are doing a coloring page with pictures of this. So if you're wondering what the pictures look like, you can look at their coloring pages. But I want to read this story to you in its entirety so you can have it fresh in your mind. Richard just read it, did an excellent job. But if you look in Mark 1:29 it says this.

And immediately after they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and they immediately spoke to Jesus about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking *her by* the hand, and the fever left her, and she served them.

Now when evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

And in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and prayed there *for a time*. Simon and his companions eagerly searched for Him; and they found Him and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." He said to them, "Let's go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may also preach there; for this is why I came." And He went into their synagogues preaching throughout Galilee, and casting out the demons.

And a man with leprosy came to Jesus, imploring Him and kneeling down, and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Moved with compassion, *Jesus* reached out with His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

You can stop the reading there, but I wanted to read that to you because you can tell what this is about at first glance, right? Verse 29 says the disciples came into the house of Simon and Andrew, and Jesus healed someone. In other words, He walks right in and cures them just like that. And you're only one chapter into the gospel of Mark at this point in time, and you're already seeing this phenomenon occur.

And another thing that jumps out at you when you read this is what He healed these people of, right? I mean, this story here, it's a fever. In other words, He's not healing this woman from a paper cut. And this is not a stubbed toe. This is much more serious. It's a deadly form of illness or disease. Which wouldn't be shocking enough if it's not for what it says next, and that is that He did it again. Verse 33 says the whole city of Capernaum came to Him, essentially, and He healed them. And then verse 39 says, people in Galilee came to Him and He heals them. And then verse 40 says, a leper, one of the worst diseases ever known to that part of the world, and He does the same thing. Because the point here is how are these people cured? Well, they came to Jesus. Amen? And what did they need to deliver them from their pain? They needed His arms of mercy. They didn't go to the law, they already had that. And they didn't go running to the synagogue because that didn't work. They needed something else. And that was the sovereign power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mention that because I think we get these things wrong, as I've said before, because we think God will heal me if I go to church. And we believe that He'll help me if I do my best to be religious and keep the law, but that's not true. This woman didn't go to church at all, and He healed her. She couldn't be religious in the Jewish way of thinking because she couldn't get out of bed; she's sick. And He heals her anyway to demonstrate it's not about that. The truth is, you can go to church or the synagogue and be the most law-abiding Jew the world has ever known, and God will have nothing to do with you. It happened all the time in the first century. It takes more than that to experience His life changing work, you have to believe in Christ from the bottom of your heart.

It's hard for some people to do because they say, "Well, if I do that, will Christ receive me? And if I come to Him, will He show mercy?" And the answer is, yes, He will because He does it here in this passage.

When I say this woman is sick, I don't know if everybody understands what that meant to these people. But to these people, the Jews thought if you were sick, you were in sin. And they believed if you were ill, and you were a leper, and you had a demon, and so forth, and so on, you did something wrong, it's your fault. For one thing, He didn't agree with that. But He says, "Even so I'm going to help these people anyway to show that I have the power to do it. You just need to trust in Me whether you're sick or not, and God will heal when He chooses."

And just out of curiosity, I've talked about this a lot before, but I mean, how many of you have studied the topic of healing? A few maybe. If you have, you'll know it's a confusing subject like the study of demons we talked about last week, because there's a lot of books that tell you to be healed you got a name and claim it. Anybody heard that before? Anybody watch TV in? Or they say if you want Jesus to heal you, you got to speak a word of faith over your body, and it will take the cancer away. But I want to tell you, the Bible doesn't do that in this passage. It doesn't tell you to speak a special word at all. It tells you to look to Christ, and He'll take your cancer away if and when He pleases. It's His choice. It all goes back to Him. He is the one who decides who is healed because He's Lord.

And this is the kind of thing we're going to talk about this morning by looking at three principles Jesus shows us about His healing ministry. I was joking to the elders this week that when you start getting into this part of the gospel of Mark, it's can be a little difficult to preach through. Because you start wondering, "How many different ways can I say Jesus healed somebody?" I mean, He just starts, He's like a healing machine at this point in the story, like a walking talking hospital. But we're gonna get three principles He shows us about this. It's going to set the stage for the rest of His healing ministry.

The first one is that Jesus heals people individually here. The first principle about His healing ministry is that He's going to heal people individually or one on one. You think Jesus had three and a half years to do His ministry in Israel and He would have been busy. But He wasn't too busy to help people with a personal touch.

And just to let you know, as you come to this part of the gospel of Mark, we're going to pick right back up where we left off last week when it says in verse 29, that “and immediately after they,” and if you see that word there, the word “they” are the characters in the story. It refers to Jesus, and the four disciples that He called earlier in the previous passage. If you remember these guys’ names are Simon and Andrew, James and John. There’s four men, two sets of brothers, who obey Jesus when He comes to them and says, “Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.”

Because as they do that, verse 21 above this says they go into Capernaum and immediately on the Sabbath, Jesus enters the synagogue and performs an exorcism. Now, I know a lot of you grew up in church, and you've probably seen a lot of strange church services. You've never seen a church service like this. Jesus was giving a sermon, a man interrupts the sermon and starts speaking probably in a strange kind of voice, and Jesus throws a demon out of him. How would you like to go to soup Sunday after that? You'd all be wondering what in the world just happened, especially because we're going to find out a moment, some of these disciples were from Capernaum, this was their synagogue, they probably knew this guy. So now, verse 29 says in our passage for today, as they're processing that, and as these men are trying to mull over what in the world just took place, they come out of the synagogue, and go into the house of Simon and Andrew, who live close by.

Now, interestingly enough, archaeologists think they might have located this house. It's two blocks away or so from the remains of the old synagogue in Capernaum in the fisherman's quarters of town, it's a modest building of several hundred square feet, maybe a little bit larger, with an earthen floor, walls made out of dark stone, covered with a layer of plaster. It also would have had a flat roof on top constructed out of wood and thatch with a staircase running along the outside on both sides, that would have allowed people to sit on the roof and enjoy the fresh air. But the reason archaeologists think that this is the house is because they found the remains of several ancient churches built on the side, saying that it was the house. And they found no reason to dispute that. Those churches go back to the second century. Which means that if this was their home, Simon and Andrew were not really poor. They weren't rich, but they weren't destitute; they had enough money to afford that.

And they were responsible, generous men because verse 30 says they use that house to care for Simon's mother-in-law. Apparently, Simon was married, and he had a wife whose mom live with them, probably after her husband died. That's usually the way things worked in the first century. And that is that when a woman would lose her spouse, it was the job of the next male in the family to step in and assume the role as her provider, which is what he did. And I might add that it put Simon, whose name was also Peter, in a unique place because a lot of the disciples from what we can tell were probably single. We don't know how many exactly, but we know the Bible never mentions as far as I could tell, never mentioned the wife of Andrew, James or John. It doesn't talk about the families of Matthew, Thomas or Bartholomew, Simon the Zealot, Thaddeus, Judas Iscariot. But it tells us about Peter's to remind us that

Peter really gave something up when he followed Christ. He left a lot behind, left a job behind, he left his fisherman's nets behind, he left his house behind, wife behind, and his mother-in-law who was ill.

Verse 30, if you look in your Bibles, it says, "Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever. And that doesn't come across well into English. But the word "fever" in Greek is *pyro*, which means fire. In other words, this woman's head was on fire here. She didn't have a temperature, she had one that was off the charts. Luke 4:38 says she had a high fever, or literally a mega fever that was probably about to kill her if they didn't do something quick.

And to be honest, you read something like this in your Bibles, as someone in Canada and the 21st century, and you say, "Well, that sounds bad, but what's the big deal? Why don't they just take her to the hospital?" They didn't have those back then. Why don't they just go to the emergency room? Didn't have that. Why don't they go to the doctors, we have free universal health care. They didn't have that. Nurses, ambulances, medicine specialists, take two aspirin and call me in the morning. None of that was available to these people. So what could this woman do? Well, she could sit in her home and wait to die. What are the options? Stay in bed and wait for the end to come or maybe just by the grace of God, you got better. That's it. That's all. This type of thing was very scary in the ancient world, not only for her, but also for the family because if the fever was contagious, they could all catch it and die. In their minds, they're kind of living with a ticking time bomb.

Which is why it says that immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. And that's the second use of the word immediately in the passage. And it shows you their desperation. Because it means that as soon as Jesus walks through the door, they pounce on Him. And the moment His foot goes through the threshold, they just bring it up, they can't help it. It's weighing on everyone's minds. In fact, they had just seen Jesus heal someone in the synagogue. And they thought if He can do that for that guy, He can do it for my mother-in-law. You would have done the same thing too, wouldn't you? Verse 31 says, Jesus came to her. She couldn't go to Him. He went to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand. And that's a very touching thing to say, because Jesus often did not touch someone's hand when He healed them, but this is an older woman. And this is someone who's not used to, just you know, jumping out of the bed. And so He does this to help her as a gentleman. Which causes the fever to leave to the point that it says that she waited on them because the recovery was instantaneous. I mean, she didn't have to wait several days for the healing to take place. And she didn't have to lie there for several hours to anticipate being better. It just happened right away.

In fact, I want you to look in your Bibles. And notice what it doesn't say here. It doesn't tell us that as Jesus did this, He danced around the room for several hours with a band playing softly in the background. And it doesn't say that He spoke in tongues and rolled around in the floor as He did it either. Doesn't tell us that Jesus named and claimed it. It doesn't say that He spoke a word over her and said, "Be gone fever. I don't want to see you again." He didn't say anything. He just showed up and did it. And the reason it happened is because the Lord Jesus Christ in His grace and mercy took the time to

bother with a poor widow who was dying. The idea here is that when the disciples spoke to Jesus about her, He didn't turn them away and say, "Leave me alone. I'm too busy." On the contrary, He dropped whatever He was doing to relieve this woman from her pain.

Do you see the compassion in this? Can you see the kindness? And can I say Jesus does the same thing today? He still loves to relieve people from their pain. And if you're wondering how it happens right now, well, one answer is it happens through the local church. What's it look like when Jesus takes over a church? Well, it looks like this. And how can you tell when He is Lord over the ministry? Will the people start loving each other like Christ did? Believe it or not, there are churches all around that have hundreds of people in them who do nothing but serve each other. They serve through counseling; they serve through prayer. They serve through things like missions and homeless shelters and soup kitchens for the poor. And Jesus loves it because that's what He did. He was constantly with the poor. And when you read the gospels, sometimes you're going to almost say, "Did Jesus hang out with anybody but sick people?" And it's a reminder that we got to do the same. Don't ever think God is pleased with you just because you go to church, He's not. You need to leave this place and visit widows and orphans and those who are hurting.

By the way, this whole thing would have shocked the disciples because that's not how the leaders in Israel typically acted. The Rabbis only helped people on Saturday morning between the hours of nine and 12 in the synagogue, and that was it. I mean, the rest of the time, they were just off limits. In fact, some of them even had a policy whereby they would not go into someone's house if they were sick, because they thought it might make them unclean. They would kind of quarantine them from the village and after COVID, we all know what that word means. Not Jesus. When He heard someone was sick, He went right into their direction in order to show the disciples, this is what you can expect, if you follow Me. I'm going to send you to chase after sick people too. The disciples are going to chase after sick people in Capernaum. They're going to do it in Galilee. Soon they'll do it all over the world because that's what the Master did.

You know, this story is interesting, because as you hear that some of you might be saying, as I talked about in the prayer, that you know, "This sounds nice pastor Jeremy, but I'm sick. Why doesn't Jesus heal me? And I'm hurting too in my life. I've got all kinds of physical problems, why doesn't He help me like He did this woman?" And to be honest, I don't know. I wish I could tell you why Jesus heals some people, and not others, but I don't have access to that information. But I can tell you, it's not because He doesn't care. You can't ever say that about Christ. All He ever did was care about people when He was on earth.

Isaiah 61 said, when the Messiah came, He would bring good news to the afflicted, and bind up the brokenhearted because He wouldn't just die on the cross and that's it. He would step in to deliver us from pain and that's what you see right here. This is a fulfillment of the prophecy. The Messiah came to help us in every way possible.

And it brings us to another principle Jesus shows us about his healing ministry. And that is that He healed people collectively. He did it individually, one on one, but a second principle is that He does it collectively, which means that He did it in large gatherings. And this is where He's going to expand this ministry and start healing the crowds. From this point onwards, really Jesus' life is going to be very different because He's not going to be able to go anywhere without people hounding Him.

That's what you find next in the passage because verse 32 says, "When evening came, after the sun had set." And you can stop there because this is an important detail. Mark is giving you this is the evening of what? Remember what day this is, this is the Sabbath. Remember that? Verse 21 right above this, says these events occur on the Jewish day of rest. Which began on sunset of the previous day and continued on in the sunset of this day. And the implication is that after the synagogue service was over in the morning, because that's when the synagogue normally met, word began to spread about what Jesus did for the demon possessed man. So that verse 32 says when evening came, as soon as the Jews could get out of their house without really breaking the law, they began bringing people to Him.

And the word "bringing" there implies they start bringing them and they can't stop because they did it continually all throughout the night. The picture there is of Jews either taking their loved ones by the hand or putting them on stretchers if they had to or carrying them on their back and just bringing them bringing them bringing them outside Simon and Andrew's door. They brought them onto the porch, if they had a porch. They brought them into the yard. They brought them onto the sidewalk. They brought them out into the street. They brought them onto the grass, and they just stacked them up like dominoes. If you've ever been on a medical mission's trip to Africa, and you've seen one of the doctors set up a free medical clinic, this is what it would look like because it's just a mass of humanity laid out in front of Him scattered all over the place.

Historians tell us the town of Capernaum had several thousand people in it. And if the whole town came out to Him or thereabouts as verse 33 says, it would have been a lot of folks. Outside of the house, it only had a couple hundred square feet in it.

And if you notice it says here that they brought two types of people. First, it was all who were ill. And that would include those who suffered from any kind of ailment, whatever, it is just a broad term. It would include all those who are sick and wounded and crippled. This would have been people who were blind and mute and deaf, people with infections, fevers, withered limbs, hemorrhaging, cholera, typhus, diphtheria, malnutrition, dehydration, skin disease, you name it, and they brought it. One commentator said Jesus was not a specialist here. He was a general practitioner, who allowed them to take anything to Him, and He dealt with it.

And it says in the passage that they also brought those who were demon possessed because apparently that was a problem in Israel at this time. And as you read that, if you're wondering, "Well, how did these

people know their loved ones were demon possessed?” And the answer is Mark doesn't tell you. The Jews didn't have a special formula for dealing with demons or for spotting demon possession. All they knew is that their friends were acting strangely, and so they brought them to Jesus. Which means that Jesus is not dealing with the normal people of Capernaum here. He's dealing with the weirdos, creeps, and troublemakers of the town. He's not helping out fine, outstanding citizens. These are the losers, freaks, and misfits. Which says a lot about His compassion too because how many of you would want to deal with a bunch of creeps in the middle of the night? Anybody? Would anyone here want to work with a bunch of demons at 1am, or whatever time it was. That's what He's doing here. And verse 34 says He healed them with so much power that He would not even permit the demons to speak because they knew who He was. And He didn't want them telling everyone because they were demons. So He told them to be quiet, and they obeyed because He's sovereign. He did all of this to demonstrate that he's Lord of all.

It didn't matter what they brought to Him, He solved every single problem, regardless of what they laid at His doorstep. This is something modern science can't do, can it? Even with all the millions of dollars we've spent on research, there is not a doctor in the world that could line up outside the town of Capernaum and heal every single problem. There's all kinds of things that we don't have a cure for yet. Let me just name cancer and dementia, right? These Jews found a cure for all of it. Take it to Jesus.

And if you're wondering, why are they so fanatical about this, let me say it again. They didn't have hospitals. They had no way to help their loved ones. And so when the whispers got out that He dealt with this demon, they just flooded at the doorstep, which happens a lot in the Gospel of Mark.

For example, if you want to keep your fingers in Mark 1 for a moment, and turn over to Mark chapter two, there it tells you about the time when the crowds came to visit Jesus again in Capernaum and a group of men brought a paralytic to Him in the house where He was at which they had to lower through the roof. Remember that story? Because the house was so full of people. And Mark 2:10 says this, it says,

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralyzed man, “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet, and go home.” And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet.

And what that means is that Jesus just said the word and this man was healed too. He told him to get up and the man right in front of their eyes. It's almost like he didn't have a choice. So when this man approached Jesus, he came into the presence of a higher power, and he did the only thing he could do. And that was to obey because sickness always obeys in the presence of Christ. It doesn't resist Him because it can't. Cancer, dementia, whatever it is, just throws its arm up in the air and surrenders.

For another example of this, you can look in Mark 3, where it tells us about the time when Jesus healed a man who had a withered hand on the Sabbath. Which was forbidden to the Jews because they

considered healing on the Sabbath to be work. So in their minds, Jesus couldn't do this. He wouldn't have the power. But verse five says this. It says, "After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored." Same story, repeated again, right? That man had been trying to do this with his hand for ages, and he couldn't. Jesus shows up and instantly, he's restored on the Sabbath, by the way.

If you want one more instance, you can look over in Mark 10. There Jesus meets a man named Bartimaeus, who's blind to the point he had to sit along the roadside and beg. But verse 52, says, And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road." And the reason he followed Christ is because he could see. But Jesus healed him to demonstrate whatever situation he faced, it all had to acknowledge Christ as King.

The reason I'm making such a big deal of this is because when you read some of the books on healing that I mentioned earlier, you get a different perspective on this because they send the impression that Jesus isn't sovereign over your sickness, but the sickness is. Because every time something bad happens in your life, they tell you it's the cancer's fault. I sinned today; it's my cancer's fault. I lost my temper; it was the cancer's fault. I was impatient and rude to my wife; it was my cancer's fault. And that's what life is like. It's about cancer, cancer, cancer, to the point they're just obsessed with it. The issue is the Bible doesn't talk like that. It doesn't tell you to be obsessed with your cancer, believe it rules everything. Christ rules everything. That's what you need to be thinking about. In this book, you're going to see everything bows the knee to Jesus. Fever bows the knee to Christ. Sickness bows the knee to Christ. Paralysis, blindness, withered hands, and so does your cancer.

If you want to look back and Mark chapter one, again, all of this would have shocked the disciples, by the way. We have to keep going back to them, because remember, they're standing by as this is happening. They're eyewitnesses. And this is their house. You can imagine how stunned they would be looking on because Jesus is setting up a free clinic in their house. It had to make them say to themselves, "What's going on? Who is this?" I mean, it's one thing to heal Simon's mother-in-law, now He's healing the whole town. Is there anything He can't do? And the answer is no because He's God. Jesus can heal anything you bring it to Him because He's Lord.

And that brings us to one more principle that the Lord shows us about His healing ministry in this passage, just to look at these other ones. To review them, the first one is that He heals people individually. Secondly, He does it collectively on a grand scale because in this passage, He heals hundreds, maybe thousands of people in one night. You would think, at this point, it would have turned the whole town upside down, right? I mean, if Jesus healed the whole town of Chilliwack, what would it do? Would it bring revival? It didn't do that to Capernaum. Many of these people took it for granted and hardened their hearts, as you'll see later on, which is a reminder that it takes more than this to be saved. You have to be born again. There are lots of people who think that if Jesus would just take my cancer away, I would believe. No, you wouldn't. All that would do is make you a cancer-free sinner. You need

Him to heal you inside if you want that to change. And that's what you need to be thinking about. And you're going to learn about that more as the story goes on.

But for now, let me just bring it to one more principle that Jesus shows you about His healing ministry, and that is that He healed continually. He heals individually, He heals collectively. Thirdly, He heals people continually, which means He does it over and over again.

And Mark goes on to talk about this in the chapter, but before he does, he takes a moment to tell you what Christ does after this when he says in verse 35, that in the early morning, while it was still dark, which means sometime around 4 to 6am, before the sun had risen in the sky, Jesus got up, implying that He didn't sleep too much. Because He's been healing people through most of the night and now after going to bed at some ridiculous hour, He gets up early to pray because the people wouldn't leave Him alone. Everywhere He went, they dog His step now. So to make sure He has time to spend with the Father, He sets out early before anyone can hinder Him. And as He does, verse 36 says,

Simon and his companions eagerly searched for Him; and they found Him and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." He said to them, "Let's go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may also preach there; for this is why I came." And He went into their synagogues preaching.

When it says that the Lord went into synagogues, that means He went into the other Jewish places of worship, like the one in Capernaum, where He healed the demon possessed man. I told you last week that once the temple was destroyed, in the sixth century BC, and the Jews were dispersed, the people of Israel began to meet in small groups they called synagogues, or assemblies. Not just one but multiple ones that were spread all throughout the world. The Rabbis said if you had 10 Jewish men in a town, you could establish your own congregation, whereby you could call a rabbi and set up elders to hold services on the Sabbath. And they would sing and pray and listen to the word being taught there. The way it worked is that the people would come in, and the men would sit on one side, and the women would sit on the other side, facing a large chair up on the front of the stage called the seat of Moses, where the rabbi would sit and teach the people. You can go to the synagogue in Capernaum and see the remains. And they have a stone seat of Moses there. I have sat in it; my feet hung that far off the ground. I don't know how tall these people were.

Mark says this is where Jesus continues His preaching ministry because as the word about Him spreads, the rabbis or elders of the synagogues would hear about and come to Him and ask Him to address the people from the chair of Moses, which He was happy to do. But apparently, that's not all He does because it says at the end of the verse, that at the same time, He cast out demons because it's almost like He can't help himself. Everywhere the Lord went, He preached and healed, preached and healed, preached and healed and cast the demons out. That was a pattern of His ministry.

Mark tells you this detail here because as you're reading through the book, you've almost got to be saying to yourself, "This is amazing. It's one miracle after another but surely, it's going to stop now. I mean, Jesus can't go on doing this." Mark says that He can. The kind of power you just read about in Capernaum was not a one-time thing in the life of Christ. It's going to be manifest all throughout His days on earth. Most scholars even believe that verse 39 could have summarized several weeks or months in the life of Christ that we don't know much about because the details just aren't in here. But one thing we know is that He was constantly coming to the aid of hurting people.

I mean, every time someone Jesus came into a town now, someone would say, "That's Jesus. Did you hear about what He did? He healed people in Capernaum. Just sat outside someone's house and just healed them over and over again. Why don't we go see if He can do the same thing for you?" And they did. They came by the multitudes to the point Jesus would eventually have to avoid the cities all together, because He caused too much commotion every time He went through there. You remember how many people He fed on that famous miracle with the fish and the loaves? That was 5,000 men not counting women and children. If the women and children were there, and they might have been, you're looking at 15,000 people: that's bigger than most of the towns around the Sea of Galilee.

In fact, just to show you how gracious Jesus is here, in the next section that we'll look at in a few weeks, it says Jesus healed a leper. See that in your Bibles there in verse 40? A leper came, that's not a leopard. It's a leper. It was one of the worst diseases in Israel. Leprosy caused the person's nervous system to break down so that they couldn't feel anything. A lot of us today say you want to be pain free, okay? You want to be pain free; lepers were pain free. And the way it worked is that if you had leprosy, your body was so numb to pain and sensation of it, that you would scratch your nose and rub the skin right off. Or you would grab hold of a red-hot iron and burn your fingers to the bone. Or you would fall asleep on the ground the way they did back then, and the rats would come nibble on your toes and fingers, and you had no idea, and they would just be gone in the morning. And I'm not saying that to be gross. I want to give you a picture of the person He's working with here. Chances are, you have probably never seen anything in your life as ugly as a leper. They had black and deformed spots all over their body with foul smelling things, and nubs where their fingers and toes were supposed to be. Some of them were missing lips. Some of them were missing their eyelids. Some of them were missing arms and legs and ears, which is why the Jews were just terrified of them. They didn't want to have anything to do with these people.

But look at what Jesus does in verse 41. It says, "Moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand and touched him." Did you hear what I just said? He touched a leper. Friends, you're not supposed to do that. It was forbidden. If you touched a leper, it made you unclean. Because now you could have leprosy and spread it everywhere. Jesus didn't care.

In fact, look at the words that He says to the leper. The leper says in verse 40, "If you're willing, you can make me clean." Jesus touched that unclean man and He said, "I'm willing. Be clean." That leper didn't

make Christ unclean. Christ made the leper clean. He didn't have to touch him. He could have healed him without doing that. But He did it because He was too overcome with mercy to stop. It had been years since anyone touched that man, maybe decades. And out of a heart overflowing with love, the Son of God just reached out and did this. What a Saviour, amen? What a God.

And I'm going to say more about that next time. I had to just spend a whole sermon on that subject, but after saying that, I think it would be good to pause here at the end just to talk about this issue of healing a little bit more.

As I said, anytime you talk about this topic, issues come up. Like, does Jesus still heal people today? Have you wondered about that? I asked that in the very beginning. Does He step into a person's life to take the pain away in the 21st century? Obviously, He does it here. He heals lepers here. But is this phenomenon is still occurring?

Let me just say I believe it is. I think Christ still heals people today. There are some of the things in the New Testament, miracles that have ceased, but I don't think this is one of them. But having said that, let me make some qualifiers to that statement because it can be taken the wrong way.

One qualifier is this. Jesus does not heal people every time they ask Him to. And you need to know that there are times when you will call out to Him like the leper did and ask Him to cleanse you in a physical way and He will say, "No." You know, one famous example of this is found in 2 Corinthians 12, where the apostle Paul has a thorn in his flesh. And he asked the Lord three times to take it away. And what does God say? He says, "No" three times to Paul, one of the greatest apostles the world's ever known. The principle is that if He said no to him, how much more is he gonna say to you and me? We're not better than Paul. So don't ever buy the lie that God wants to heal you just because you're a Christian; He might not. Sometimes he wants to keep the thorn in your flesh, so he can accomplish greater things in your life. Like taking away your pride. Has anyone here ever been sick before? What did it do? It took away your pride. Ever gone to the hospital, had a thorn in the flesh? What's the result? It humbles you. That's why God put you through it.

I know a lot of people today who don't want to think that way because they want to blame their sickness as a scapegoat for their problems. And say that "I sinned today, it's my cancer's fault. I lost my temper. It's the cancer's fault. And if God would take the cancer away, it would make me a godlier person. That's not true. It's not true. All your cancer can do is give you options. It's your fault if you pick a bad one. The solution is to learn how to repent of those things. Don't name it and claim it. Don't try to speak a word of faith over the cancer. Learn how to have self-control over your sin. Amen?"

It brings us to another qualifying statement for this, and that is that not only does Jesus not always heal people today, but when He does, you need to see that we don't have a lot of information about what it looks like. His work of healing is a mysterious thing for us. I'm sure the doctors in this room would say

if they could get their minds around this more it would be wonderful to know everything about the healing power of Christ, but it's not the way it works. His healing takes on many different forms. I mean, in this one passage here in Mark 1, He heals demoniacs, widows, and sick people, just to name a few. And He heals them in synagogues, homes and out in the street. He does it publicly and privately. He does it covertly and overtly. Sometimes He heals in silence. He didn't say a word to that woman. Sometimes He speaks. Sometimes He touches people. Sometimes it's in front of a crowd. Sometimes it's in solitude. Sometimes someone grabs the hem of His garment. One time He spat on the ground and anointed a man's eyes with mud and saliva, and we could go on; but the point is that there's a great variety to this. So you want to be careful before you go around speculating about who's going to be healed and who's not. The truth is that you don't know. I've had someone say to me, they knew they were going to be healed. And when I asked them why they said it was because a preacher told them on the radio. I said, "Well, someone told me on the radio, there's aliens. I didn't believe it. Why are you believing that?" You have to show discernment. Don't believe everything someone tells you on the media.

It brings you to one more qualifying statement about this, and that is that after saying all of that if you need to be healed and you're wondering what to do, let me just say like we did last week, pray about it. Go to God instead of a faith healer, that job is over. This might be the most controversial thing I'll say this morning, but if you're going to be strictly biblical about it, and stay away from the crazy stuff on television, you have to realize the Scripture does not give the authority for us to heal people ourselves. Like you see here, Jesus had that, and the apostles had that; but you're not Jesus and you're not an apostle. That's something that has ceased in the first century. Which means that all the things that you find people doing in the Word of Faith crusades, where they stick out their hands and zap people with healing power, it's just not true. What's this gonna do to somebody's illness? How is zapping them going to stop? It's not, so don't get caught up in that; you're not healed that way. You're healed by going to God and leaving it with Him.

If you want to write this verse down, James 5:13-15 says, "Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. And is anyone among you sick? He must call for the elders and they're to pray. " In other words, pray yourself and have the church pray for you. Go to God individually and go to Him as a congregation, and just wait and see what He'll do. Jesus is sovereign, and He does love you, and He will listen and He's not too busy. And He does still heal, but He'll only do it if you ask. You need to ask Him to do that.

The story is told at the time when Joni Erickson Tada, who was paralyzed at a very young age of 17. was visiting with a friend who said, "Joni, why don't you pray for God to heal you?" And she said, "I have." The friend said, "but it didn't work. You're still in the wheelchair." And Joni replied, "Well, not yet. Just because God hasn't answered that now, doesn't mean He won't do it in heaven. He will. I'm just waiting for Him."

I tell you that story because she's right. Whether you're healed in this life or the next, it doesn't matter. You will be healed one day; you'll have a resurrected body and there will be no sickness and there will be no disease and there will be no paralysis and things like that. Pray for it. And be patient while the Lord answers in His time. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we have covered a very big topic this morning, just to the best of our ability. And it is a humbling one, like all the other ones that we look at, when we talk about the life of Christ. We don't have any idea of really, outside of the Scriptures of what it would look like to see the Son of God walking on the Earth, with power like this power to heal and heal again. Lord, I thank You for what we've studied, and we pray You will help us to apply it to our lives today. Because like I said earlier, it's a deeply personal subject. We live in a world where people are constantly trying to take their pain away. And they do it through pills, and they do it through medicine, and they do it through surgeries and all those things are fine. But oftentimes, the pain remains. Lord, we do look forward to a day when the pain will go away and a time when You will heal us completely. But until then we live in this fallen place. And we've got to live the day by day.

Would You help us to remember to look to Christ as we do this? The great healer, the One who has more compassion than we could even fathom toward fallen broken sinners. Lord, thank You for Jesus in these true stories that we read about Him because we could not make this up. That He would come and go to a cross and die for us, but before He ever even got there, He's going to reach out and touch people and cure their problems.

Lord, thank You for such a Saviour. Would we all learn from His compassion and go from here with more mercy in our spirits and hearts to help those who are broken among us and to pray? Pray for our physical problems. Pray for the problems of others, out of a heart of mercy. Lord, thank You for this and as we come together and enjoy this Soup Sunday and the fellowship time, would our fellowship be sweet as we remember the Saviour and what He's done for each of our lives individually? I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.