

Series Introduction: Hello everyone! Welcome to our first Sunday together in the New Year. Last week Doug kicked off our new series in the book of Mark.

During the month of December, we looked at many of the Old Testament prophecies and predictions looking forward to the birth of Jesus at Christmas. And now, in this New Year I thought it would be helpful for us to continue on in the life of Jesus and follow his life and ministry according to the Gospel of Mark all the way to Easter, which is only 3 months away.

We're calling this series *Jesus is For You* because everything Mark teaches about Jesus demonstrates that he's for you wholly... he's for your protection, he's for your justification, your encouragement, and your greatness. And most of all, he's for your salvation. Today we're going to see *he's for your healing in your life*.

Last week Doug got us started in the opening verses of Mark 1. Mark was written by a man named John Mark. He was a cousin of Barnabas, a close associate of Peter, and supported Paul in his first missionary Journey. He's the one Paul had a falling out with but was later reconciled. John Mark wrote his account of Jesus's life and ministry for the benefit of non-Jewish believers in Rome.

His Gospel has a very different feel than the other gospels. It's fast paced. It cuts to the chase. While other Gospel writers often share more detail or color commentary, John Mark takes a different approach. Mark moves quickly from one episode in Jesus' life and ministry to another, often using the adverb, "Immediately" to transition to the next story. Think of the Gospel of Mark as, "All thriller and no filler."

And right out of the gate, Mark comes out gospel guns a blazing declaring Jesus is on the scene...and people immediately take notice. Just Twenty-Six verses into his gospel Mark shares this summary: *"The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits, and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee."*

[Transition] - The people were waking up to the stunning news that **Jesus was for them? He's in their corner!** And one of the first ways we learn Jesus was for them, was for their healing...and not just spiritually, but mentally, emotionally, and physically too. Look at Mark 1:29-31.

What we see out of the gate is nothing is too difficult for Jesus. **Jesus can heal any illness we face!**

- The fever of Simon's Mother-in-law (vs.29-31)

In Mark's day a fever was considered an illness in itself rather than a sign of some other medical condition or infection. Some even thought a person who had a fever was burning on the inside as a kind of judgment from God, but others refused to spiritualize it. They treated it as a purely physical illness. Regardless of what they believed a fever was, everyone knew that only almighty God could heal a fever instantly.

Mark makes it clear that this was an instant supernatural healing by Jesus. The fact that Simon's Mother-in-law was up helping to serve Jesus and the others was physical proof that she was instantly healed. One moment delirious with fever, the next Jesus speaks a word to her and the next she's up serving him. By the way...that's how it usually happens when you meet Jesus. *His work in your life compels you to love and serve him.*

[Transition] -Now, word was getting out that Jesus is bringing a new teaching, and new authority, doing things no one had ever seen. He demonstrated a ton of God-like characteristics and people are beginning

to learn that with Jesus God is here and he's in their corner, on their side. He is FOR them.

So, when they find out that Jesus is at Simon's house, they crowd around the front door. And on the doorstep of Simon's house Mark makes it clear that it's not only physical illness that Jesus heals but all manner of spiritual and emotional illnesses as well. Look at verses 32-34.

- The various diseases at Simon's doorstep (vs.32-34)

I want you to notice the distinction Mark keeps making in these verses.

"...all the sick and demon possessed." "...and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons..."

Again, Mark's emphasizing nothing is too difficult for Jesus. Never before in history had the world seen the likes of what happened that day at Peters' front door. Jesus demonstrated his ability to heal ANY condition, ANY disease, or ANY illness that he encounters. And it's true for you today. And everyone knows that only God almighty can do that. Remember, God said, "I the Lord do not change."¹

For those in Capernaum that message is getting around fast. And so, they came. They came, with conditions as varied as the clouds of the sky, with one thing in common: they knew their need—no one had to convince them of that—and knowing your need is always the first step to finding Jesus and finding healing. Friends, let your need and your weakness lead you to Jesus. He's for you!

[Illustration] - The Journal of the Medical Library suggests there are nearly 50 thousand different diseases that can plague the human body.² "MalaCards: The Human Disease Database is a robust database related to various human diseases. The anatomical disease section

¹ Malachi 3:6.

² JMLA -<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5764584/#:~:text=The%20anatomical%20disease%20section%20includes,%2C%20muscle%2C%20and%20reproductive%20diseases.>

includes 18 major categories with more than 26,000 diseases representing all areas of the body, including blood, bone, immune, muscle, and reproductive diseases. The global disease section contains 6 categories: cancer, fetal, genetic, infectious, metabolic, and rare diseases, and almost 18,000 specific diseases."

[Transition] – Friends...the power of Jesus is supreme over all of these diseases. Jesus can heal any illness we face. Fever fled at his command and all sorts of diverse diseases and demons vanish at his demand. And if any skeptics remained in the crowd, they would be hard pressed to argue with the power Jesus demonstrates in his next encounter ...Look at verses 40-45.

- The leprosy at Jesus feet (vs.40-45)

For us to appreciate the full significance of this miracle in a first-century context, we have to keep in mind that deeply entrenched in the Jewish mindset was the belief only God could heal leprosy.

A bit about Leprosy and this leper:

A diagnosis of leprosy in Jesus day carried the same horror as the disease of cancer carries today. Most believed it was a disease that was from the pit of hell and a represented God's curse on you.

"The Jews regarded it as 'the stroke of God.' The leper carried about in his body corruption, contamination, and death. Society ostracized and rigidly segregated him so he couldn't contaminate others of the community.

If anyone wandered into his vicinity, he had to cover his mouth and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' to warn the other person away. He was banished to the fringe of society. He was excommunicated from the religious life, functions, and feasts of the nation. His only companions were other lepers in the same pitiable condition as himself. He could not work because who would want the goods and services of a leper? He could

not come and go as he pleased. He literally endured a living death, because his disease was highly contagious and was incurable.”³

It began in a small way. The feeling in his fingers began to fade. The same in his toes. Then it spread up the limbs. Before long, he presented a dreadful spectacle. Healthy limbs became rotted stumps. Victims of leprosy had no hope. They were cut off from family, cut off from friends, and cut off from the fellowship of the people of God. Their future was only death.”⁴

No wonder leprosy is often viewed as a type and picture of sin. It’s a systemic infection that had no cure apart from the miraculous touch of Jesus.

The man in our story was a leper but he was one who made a wise decision; he would go to Jesus. He would go against all the cultural rules and expectations, and he would go to his knees in front of Jesus. There’s actually nothing more freeing and lifegiving than that.

Doing what he did took so much courage. For one thing, crowds were always mobbing Jesus, and who can ever predict the actions of a mob? He might have been stoned long before he reached Jesus.

So what? He was dead man walking. He had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I wonder if his fellow lepers tried to dissuade him because none of them came with him. Didn’t matter...he was determined to come. And on this day he began his lonely journey to Jesus...shouting “unclean,” “unclean” as the crowd parted and kept their distance.

In all humility, in obvious need and with simple faith, he tells Jesus, *“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”* And then, Mark zooms the camera in tight on Jesus and you can see Jesus was obviously moved with

³ Phillips, John, Exploring The Gospel of Mark, Kregel: Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, p. 46.

⁴ Ibid. p. 46.

compassion. And then he did the unthinkable...he reached his hand out and touched him! OMG!

Why did he touch him? Jesus didn't have to touch him. He's a leper! He could have healed him with a word...from a hundred yards away. But instead, he chose to heal him with a touch.

I bet that man hadn't been touched like that in years. He couldn't remember feeling the flood of emotions triggered by a touch, a handshake, or an embrace. The touch of Jesus made him feel alive. He looked on his skin and all evidence of the disease was completely gone. This man once again had a life, and it was never going to be the same.

I want you to know that everyone in this room is like this leper.

- He was terminal and you are terminal. We're all going to die someday.
- He was filled with the disease and decay of leprosy and the Bible tells us that every one of us is filled with the disease and decay of sin.
- He was hopelessly doomed to death unless he went to Jesus and in faith called out to him for healing. And each one of us is without hope unless we come to Jesus and call out to him in faith for forgiveness.
- When this leper put his faith in Jesus and called out to him he was cleansed. And when any of us call out to Jesus and ask him to cleanse us of our sin he responds immediately just as he did for this leper.

[Transition] - Jesus has the power and ability to heal any disease we face; physical, spiritual, mental, or emotional.

Now, the Bible makes it very clear our healing is rooted in Jesus' work on the cross. I want you to see a very important connection Matthew makes for us in his account of the scene we are looking at this morning at Simon Peter's home. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 8. Read 14-17.

Healing is rooted in Jesus' work on the cross.

- The important connection between Matthew 8:14-17 & Isaiah 53:4

In the flow of this account in Matthew...Jesus had healed the man with leprosy, healed the centurion's servant and now in these verses healed Peter's mother-in-law, and then drives out demons with a word from many. And the text says, "he healed all the sick."

In this context Matthew points out what in verse 17? "That this [healing those sick in body and soul] was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah; "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

That is a quote from Isaiah 53:4-6. Let's turn to it and get it from the horse's mouth. **READ Isaiah 53:4-6.** Who is Isaiah talking about here? Jesus.

In other words, from Isaiah's declaration that Jesus took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, and then Matthew's teaching that Jesus healed as a fulfillment of that prophecy, we can correctly hold that the same miraculous healing which Jesus did then is still available for the believer today in Christ through what he accomplished on the cross...just as salvation, grace and mercy are available to us.

[Transition] - Clearly Jesus has the power to heal and the desire to do so willingly and compassionately. Even today he is available as our willing and compassionate healer. We believe this here at Foothills Church and so we practice this, and we pray for healing all the time. Now, with that being said...why do some prayers for healing go unanswered?

- ***Prayer for healing is to be offered by those who believe Jesus has the power to heal. (James 5)***

First of all, I want to point out the faith referred to in the James text is the faith of the Elders who have been asked to pray for the sick person. In other words, when we pray for healing, we need to believe that Jesus has the power and authority to do it.

I have heard horror stories about people who have asked for prayer for healing, but no healing comes. Then on top of their illness guilt is heaped

on them by some suggesting if a prayer of faith for healing is not answered it is an indication that there is either a "sin Problem" or a "faith problem" in the sick person.

Again, the prayer of faith in the James text refers to the faith of the Elders, not the sick person. Also, it is critical to remember that, while some passages point to a potential link between sickness and sin, this is not *always* the case.

The teaching of James 5:14-16 gives indication that in some cases there may be a sin problem that is connected with the person's illness. In those cases, James instructs us to make sure that we are being completely open, humble, and yielded before God as we pray for healing. Everyone involved in the prayer for healing is to have this posture of heart.

This makes sense to us, I think. It's unhelpful to come before our Holy God and pray earnestly for healing when we won't even come clean before him about our sin. In short, if there is a sin problem...confess it and get right with God before you pray for his blessing of healing.

[Transition]-Now, remember, while there is this possible link between sin and sickness, the Bible is clear that this is not always the case.

John 9:2-3 is a perfect example of the error we must avoid. John writes, *"As he [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."*

[Transition] - These verses begin to point to the role of God's sovereign purposes in our healing. So, when we pray for healing, certainly are to call out to God in faith (believing he can do it), just as the leper in our story in Mark calls out.... "Jesus, if you are willing, I know that you can heal me."

Don't miss the two truths which this leper is keeping in view...One, is his faith...he believes Jesus can...we've already seen that...but the other

truth he keeps in view is God's sovereignty, or his sovereign purposes in his life. He says, "If you are willing..." He calls out to Jesus for healing, while he surrenders to God's sovereignty over all of life and over his specific circumstances.

[Quote] - The great Bible Scholar, Matthew Henry said, "Sometimes Christ sees that we need sickness for the good of our souls more than healing for the good of our bodies."

Let me sum up what we've learned today: We've seen today that Jesus loves to heal, wants to heal, and is completely able to heal all our diseases. Through Jesus, God is here and he's FOR YOU. He's on your side. We've seen that he brings healing to our lives through his willing, available, and compassionate touch. And we, like the leper, are to pray in faith for healing and then seek to trust and rest in God's sovereign will for our lives.

[Transition] - Now, with these principles as a foundation, I want to conclude with a few final cautions.

A few final cautions:

- Believing Jesus is your healer does not mean you should avoid doctors or counselors. When you pray for healing, God may choose to heal you instantly, supernaturally or he may choose to use the advances of medicine/mental health that he has allowed to be discovered. Both glorify Him!!!
- Do not blame the sick person's lack of faith when healing doesn't occur. Our responsibility is to believe and pray. God's is to heal. And if he doesn't, it's his responsibility.
- Be cautious of any promise of healing when it's coupled with an appeal for money.

- Be suspect of those who emphasize healing in a show-like atmosphere or claim control over healing.

Jesus is still willing and able to heal all our diseases in accordance with God's purposes in our lives. We are to pray in faith, believing that God can heal us while actively surrendering to his sovereign will in our lives.

RESPONSE:

It's fitting after a message like this that we take some time for prayer for healing of any sort. I'd like to ask...if there is anyone here today who needs healing in their life. Would you stand where you are?

Now, I'd like to ask any of those around these people who are confident God can and still does heal, would you gather around them, ask them to briefly explain what they desire healing for, and then place a hand on their shoulder and a couple of you pray for them.

The worship team is going to lead us in one final song after we give you a few moments to pray. While some in our gathering are praying...the rest of us can also be praying for them from a distance, or simply sit in reflection and worship.