

“The Doctor and His Medicine”

It is no surprise that one of the endearing and enduring titles given to Jesus is “The Great Physician”. Wherever Jesus went, when persons were receptive, He healed people. He didn’t just heal bodies – He brought wholeness and wellness to every aspect of life.

The text for today is Luke 5:27-32. Jesus called Levi (Matthew) to follow Him. Levi was a tax collector. In those days, tax collectors were hated. They worked for Rome, so Jews regarded them as traitors. Almost every tax collector was dishonest. Levi invited a bunch of his friends to his home. Jesus ate a meal with them. The religious leader – the Pharisees and the scribes – grumbled because Jesus rubbed shoulders with this element of people. Jesus’ reply: “People who are well don’t need a doctor. Sick people do. I didn’t come for the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance.” *Jesus understood His mission as the Great Physician was to heal sick people and a sick world!*

We can be sick in many ways. Some of us have *physical ailments*. Parts of our body may not be functioning properly, or a part of our body is diseased or broken down. But we can be sick in our *mind*. Our thinking, our reasoning is warped, unhealthy. Or, we can have some form of mental illness. We also may need healing in our *relationships* – our relationship with a family member, a co-worker, a friend. Our relationship with God. Some people just have a hard time getting along with others. We can be sick *morally*, our thought life is not pure, our motives are selfish, our behaviors lack integrity. And on top of it all, we live in a *sick world* – filled with all sorts of evil and injustice.

Jesus came to restore people and creation to the wholeness that was lost in Garden of Eden when humankind disobeyed God and went our own way! In the Book of Revelation we are given this ultimate vision of people and creation being made whole and well again. It pictures the tree of life in the eternal city, “and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2).

Jesus did not come to make people *religious*, but to make people *sane and whole and well* in every aspect of our life! ***He is the Great Physician. Dr. Jesus.***

Let’s think more about this image of Jesus as a “doctor”! First of all, ***you don’t have to make an appointment to see this doctor.*** It is true that today we have walk-in clinics. Urgent Care. No appointment necessary. But chances are, if you want to see your family doctor, you have to make an appointment. If you want to see a specialist, you may have to make an appointment weeks out!

But the truth is, Dr. Jesus is trying to make an appointment with us! His mission was to come to earth to make people whole. And much of the time, He’s trying to get our attention! Jesus embodies the *initiating love of God* that is always reaching out to save and heal us. *Jesus is always on call. 24/7.*

And Jesus makes house calls. When’s the last time you found a doctor willing to make house calls? When I was a kid, we had a kind family physician. His name was Dr. Sullivan. He

would come to your house. He would ring the bell then walk right in. You don't see doctors making house calls much today (at least not in this part of the country).

Jesus makes house calls! You don't have to come to a church building to see this doctor. He's in your home, at your work, in your car – wherever! He's always ready to extend a healing hand to us wherever we are!

But you know, some people are reluctant to go to the doctor. Oh, I know. There are a few people who are always running to the doctor. *Hypochondriacs*, who focus on every little ache or pain. A man who was always imagining something wrong with himself went to his doctor and with great alarm said he was sure he had a fatal liver disease. The doctor said, 'Nonsense. You would never know if you had that ailment or not. With that disease there's no discomfort of any kind.' "I know," the patient grimaced, "those are my symptoms, exactly!"

But for every hypochondriac, there are many more who drag their feet or even refuse to go to the doctor. They ignore obvious symptoms. They minimize or dismiss signs that could signal a health problem. A lot of times it's because they are afraid of what they may find out.

This is true in the spiritual realm also. These are people who want to avoid Jesus and the church. They don't want to go to church, don't want to hear sermon, don't want to read the Bible, because they might be told something about themselves they don't want to hear. And so they resist the very One who could help them.

And then there are others who say, "I'm not sick, it's the people around me." We all know people who have trouble admitting they're wrong, and are always blame someone else. The doctor said to the patient's wife, "Your husband must have rest and quiet. I'm going to prescribe these sleeping pills." "Thank you, doctor," the lady said, "how often is he supposed to take them?" "Oh, they're not for him, they're for you to take!" the doctor replied.

Did you ever pray that Jesus would help your husband or wife to change, or that God would fix your kids, or your parents? Ever spend time in prayer telling God what's wrong with someone else? Sometimes we want Dr. Jesus to give medicine to the other person, when we may be the one who needs it!

Another point about Dr. Jesus and His medicine, and this may seem obvious, but maybe we haven't really thought about this: ***Jesus uses different remedies to heal different kinds of problems!*** Did you ever see one of those old western movies, where the medicine wagon rolls into town. There's this slick talking dude peddling bottles of "Miracle Potion" (which usually contains more alcohol than anything else). And it's supposed to cure just about every illness under the sun! Well, I think sometimes we get the impression that this is the way Jesus heals. One remedy for every problem and every sin!

Pastor, and author, Bruce Larson, in a magazine interview, once pointed out how Jesus, as a wise

doctor, didn't prescribe the same medicine for everyone. And how sometimes we in the church, in trying to help people, give them the wrong medicine.

For example, Jesus healed one blind man by spitting into the dirt, making a little mud pie, and then putting it on the man's eyes (many, at that time, believed there were healing powers in one's spittle!) But on the other hand Jesus healed a paralyzed man by telling him his sins were forgiven (apparently there was some spiritual dysfunction that was the root cause of this man's physical paralysis). He healed a man with a shriveled hand by asking the man to extend it.

Jesus also used different remedies to attack peoples' *spiritual* issues. He tells a rich young ruler that if he is to follow Jesus, he has to go and sell everything he has and give the proceeds to the poor. Jesus didn't say that to everyone. But this man's spiritual disease (apparently) was his attachment to money and wealth. In order for Jesus to save and heal the religious scribes and Pharisees he had to break through their pride and self-righteousness. So He's brutally honest with them: He calls them hypocrites, blind, snakes, who were not going to get into God's kingdom. But on the other hand, to a woman morally sick, caught right in the act of adultery and dragged before Jesus, shamed and humiliated, He said, "I don't condemn you; go and sin no more"

Sometimes Jesus said we need major, radical surgery. "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30). Other times Jesus prescribed a soothing ointment for our wounds: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Jesus has a treatment plan tailored just for you!

Illust. So, here's a follower of Jesus with very low self-esteem, very little self-confidence. We may say, "Bless you; the Bible says, 'Blessed are the meek'" Bruce Larson comments on this: "People who are frightened by life, don't know who they are, and go around apologizing for themselves think they are being meek. This is not meekness, this is sickness...it is living a lie. They are telling people that they are a nobody, and God says they are somebody. They are a unique, unrepeatable miracle of God." Then he says, what happens is too often these weak people hear the gospel message to submit and become more submissive. And in reality they become more sick.

On the other hand, maybe we're boastful or egotistical. Jesus may just back off a bit and allow us to go through a heartache or a crisis, so we can be humbled, and begin to look up to Him. Or maybe we're defeated and discouraged, and Dr. Jesus' treatment plan involves sending someone across our path to affirm and encourage us.

We in the church probably too often have tried to cure everybody's sin problem with the same remedy.

Just read this gospel tract, “Steps To Salvation” and you’ll be sure to get saved. Read this book, hear this tape, and we guarantee that it will change your life! Well, maybe. Maybe not. Remember that little folder, “The Four Spiritual Laws”. It was put out by Campus Crusade For Christ. Many were led to the Lord through this. But others were turned off by it.

Dr. Jesus has many ways to heal us *physically* – doctors, prayer, surgery, laying on of hands and anointing with oil, physical therapists, speech therapists. And Dr. Jesus has many ways to heal us *emotionally and spiritually* – through Bible teachers and family therapists and caring friends and Christian books and sermons and psychiatrists and many more!

Aren’t you glad that the Great Physician knows and loves us enough to have a treatment plan designed just for each one of us!

Here’s another thing about the Dr. Jesus and His medicine: *None of us are very good at diagnosing our own illnesses and the help needed.* If I am left to diagnose my own illness and prescribe what I need to get well, I will probably pick the quickest, least painful, least demanding treatment I can. The same is true in the spiritual realm.

Someone has said, “People usually join churches that emphasize their own strengths and interests and reinforce their prejudices and blind spots.” The same is true of sermons. Sermons we “like” are probably the ones we agree with. But the sermons that heal us and help us be better people are often the ones we don’t entirely agree with, or even the ones that make us upset or angry.

Want to get a more realistic diagnosis of your faults and shortcomings? Ask your husband, ask your wife, ask your children, ask the person who can be most honest about you. Read the Bible and use its teaching to evaluate your character and behavior.

One closing thought about Dr. Jesus and His medicine: *In order to be helped and healed, we have to have faith in our doctor.* Maybe you’ve even changed doctors at some point because you no longer had faith in that doctor. Last spring I had a long bout with a viral infection that dragged on and on, then left and later came back. In the course of it, I made several doctor appointments on a Saturday, when my regular doctor was not in. On one visit, I saw a nurse-practitioner (not a “real doctor”); the other time I saw a young lady just out of medical school. To be honest, I just didn’t have the confidence in them that I did with my doctor. (Actually, I did what the nurse practitioner prescribed, and I got better)! *Faith and trust in the doctor and the process is important!*

Jesus talked about faith, and the importance of faith. There were times when He would say to a person, “Let it be done to you according to your faith.” Faith is not *the only factor* that determines our healing, but it is an important one! It’s important to have faith in Him – that we trust Him as our Savior, and we have faith in His power to heal and help us. I think most physicians will agree that a positive attitude, trust in the doctor and what he or she says, and a belief that we can get well, are all important.

There you have it. Dr. Jesus, the Great Physician.

Once when Nancy and I moved to a new church and a new town, I chose for my family doctor someone who was a nice man, and a dedicated follower of Jesus. At one point, I was playing football with a confirmation class at the church, and one of the kids kicked me in the back of my ankle. I knew something was wrong! It continued to hurt, so I went to my family doctor, who examined me, and told me just to give it time, and it would heal. But it didn't get any better.

So I went to see a specialist. He came into the room, looked at the chart, asked me to walk across the room, and within a matter of seconds told me I had torn my Achilles tendon. Well, the next time I saw my family doctor, I told him what happened. He said, "You know, after your visit, I got to thinking about your symptoms, and I wanted to get back to you, but I couldn't remember your name."

Guess who changed doctors after that visit!

There is a Great Physician who knows you by name, who loves and cares for you deeply, and who sacrificed His own life so that you may come to Him and find healing and wholeness.

His name is Dr. Jesus.

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