

Kingdom Strategy: The Healing Power

In our previous studies, we have seen that Jesus came (1:14-20) announcing a Kingdom—a regime change—and though others inaugurate their kingdoms through violence and coercion, Jesus brings his kingdom through the ministry of His Word (1:21-28).

Today we shall see that His Kingdom also comes “with deeds of love and mercy,” and with powerful healings.

Mark 1:29-45

²⁹ And immediately he¹ left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” ³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

⁴⁰ And a leper² came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And Jesus³ sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

I. Jesus Heals All Our Diseases (vv. 29-34)

We learn from Jesus that the gospel ministry includes both word and deed. We must never separate these two fundamental components of the good news.

We read in the Bible that there were many diseases among the people in Jesus' day, and there were very few medical remedies. The belief of the time was generally that God brought disease on people (usually because of their own sin) and that only God could remove disease. Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and every other sick person brought to Him.

II. Only Jesus Heals Our Only Terminal Disease (vv:35-39)

In this paragraph we see the intense purpose of Jesus to share the Word with every village. The disciples, on the other hand, were more inclined to set Jesus up as a wildly popular "faith healer" in Capernaum. Jesus had zero interest in that, for his overwhelming concern is to deliver people from the "plague of plagues," the terminal disease of sin, which can only be cured by faith in the good news preached (see Romans 10:13-15).

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This is why all of our ministries and missions must be “holistic,” that is, they must address both temporal suffering and eternal suffering, with the greatest intensity on relieving eternal suffering. Just do the math!

III. Jesus Heals Us In Order To Fellowship With Us (1:40-45)

In this remarkable passage a leper breaks all conventional social customs, violating his quarantine, and approaches Jesus with a request to be made clean. Lepers were not only severely and hopelessly diseased, they were also excluded from the worshipping fellowship of God's people. Here we can see the ultimate strategy of Jesus' healing ministry: He is cleansing us that we might reenter the presence of God!

Jesus strictly commands the leper, just as He had the disciples and the demons, not to broadcast His identity (in order that He might be able to carry out His preaching ministry freely), but the leper seemingly can't contain himself. The message of Jesus goes everywhere from the lips of those who have been touched, cleansed, and saved by Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that we care for the physical needs of our neighbor, as well as his/her spiritual needs? Why are we often disinclined to do that?
2. Why is it important that the proclamation of the gospel always be integrally connected to our mercy ministries? Why are we often disinclined to do that?
3. What can we learn about prayer from the life of Jesus in Mark 1:35-39?
4. What "cleansing" do all men need today to come into fellowship with God? How does this cleansing occur (see Titus 3:5)?
5. Who are the "lepers" of our own day? How ought we to seek to minister to them?

Going Deeper:

How ought your study of this text affect the way you do ministry?

Is there any "leper" in your life whose needs you've been neglecting? How can you rectify that?