

Luke 4:38-44

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 30, 2022

How do you regard your faith? Is it something you restrict to Sunday only? You put it on for an hour here and then go home and take it off for the rest of the week? Maybe you view your church involvement as something you inherited. When you grew up it was expected that Sundays meant church; it's just what you did (it's not bad to have the worship habit, but that way of viewing it sounds rather routine and could be meaningless). Perhaps you view it as good insurance in case there's something to it. Maybe it's something you tolerate because your spouse or parents want you to go. Or is faith and church vital, a valuable aspect of your very being? I hope it is that last description and not because you pay me to say things like that. I want you to know what today's text shows.

JESUS IMPACTS YOUR LIFE

- I. With his compassion
- II. With his power
- III. With his gospel message

Jesus impacts your life with his compassion. Simon Peter's mother-in-law experienced his goodness. Jesus came to the family's home after Sabbath activity in the synagogue. He was now in Capernaum, which became his base of operations after being rejected in his hometown of Nazareth, which we heard in last week's Gospel reading. When he arrived at the home he was informed that this lady had a high fever, something Luke as a doctor specially noted. Jesus didn't merely suggest taking two aspirin and resting. He felt for her, rebuked the fever and it left. He recognized the suffering sin had brought into the world. Physical ailments are not normally the result of a particular sin but they exist because sin came into the world. Her condition touched the Savior's heart. He had compassion on her and removed the problem.

Her recovery was immediate and complete. No recuperation time was needed. "She got up at once and began to wait on them." She had renewed strength and showed her gratitude for the miraculous recovery with service.

Many more people benefited from the healing power of Jesus that day in Capernaum. Evening brought an end to the Sabbath so activity resumed. Especially this day it did. Scores of people lined the street leading to Simon's home. People were bringing others with all kinds of various physical ailments. No doubt there were disabilities that had plagued some from birth, while others were

due to injury. There may have been cases of leprosy. Some may have been blind or deaf. Others would have had short term conditions like the fever that Peter's mother-in-law experienced.

By evening Jesus could have been ready for some rest and relaxation. He could have turned them all away or used his power to issue a mass edict, "Everyone get better." That's not what he did. He dealt with them all individually, "laying his hands on each one, he healed them." Countless miracles occurred.

Jesus has compassion on us as well. He cares about each one. He knows our needs. They may be physical in nature. Or they can be emotional needs. We think nobody cares about us. We feel neglected and rejected. We are lonely. The world seems to be passing us by. Jesus knows and cares. He has compassion for us and knows our pain. You are never alone. You are important to him. That knowledge impacts your life in a positive way. It gives us comfort and hope.

II.

Jesus is also able to do something about your needs with his power. He showed it in the cases of demon possession brought to him that evening. Demons are the angels that joined Satan in rebelling against God way back in creation's early history. Because they were defeated and are unable to return to their original holiness, they continue like their leader to oppose God. One of the ways was to take physical possession of an individual as a special challenge during the earthly ministry of the Savior and in the apostolic age. While some have viewed these cases as diseases that they didn't know how to treat back then, such as epilepsy, that is unlikely. Luke was a physician, so had familiarity with health conditions. While a seizure may have a similar appearance to some of the effects of demon possession, those with epilepsy don't talk during the episode, as was the case here. Also, Jesus would then be faking when he issued commands for the departure of the spirits, if there was no such thing as demon possession. We know that he does not lie.

"Moreover, demons came out of many people," the record shows. The demons were strong but they were no match for our Lord. At his command they came out. They fired off a parting shot, "shouting, 'You are the Son of God!'" They knew Jesus from their background as angels. Was it their hope to make a connection between them and Jesus in the minds of people and thus produce rejection of the Savior?

He wanted none of it. "But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ." Again his power was evident. There was no

more protest. He wants to be confessed by believers, not by demons. In addition, there were the false hopes many people held for the Messiah or the Christ and they didn't need any more confusion of the issue.

Christ exerts his power in our lives. As the creator of all, he is over it. That's why we go to him in prayer in times of illness. That's also why pastors make hospital calls, although they have been restricted during the Covid times. We will use medical treatments, for those discoveries are part of what God has made available for our care and an answer to our prayers. We need God to make treatments effective. We also look to his direction of events to serve for our benefit. Powerful opponents can't overrule his actions and purposes. He sees to it that his will is done. He can solve problems that seem insurmountable to us or protect us in great danger. The impact of his power in your life is confidence for each day. He will guide and guard and bless you. Trust his almighty power.

III.

Most of all, Jesus impacts your life with his gospel message. He sought some alone time. Early the next morning he headed away to a private place. He would spend time in prayer with his heavenly Father and meditation. It is beneficial to get away from the hustle and bustle and commotion of everyday living.

His private time was soon interrupted. "The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them." Whether their motivation was good as they wanted more time to learn from him, or selfish, in an effort to see and benefit from more miracles, it was not going to happen. "But he said, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.'" There were more souls to reach. There was a world out there in need of the gospel, although Jesus did not personally get far out of Palestine—it would remain for his followers then and now to extend his Word to the ends of the earth. The message to be shared was the good news of the kingdom. He was referring to his rule in our hearts. The faith needs to be spread, which is an Epiphany emphasis and why this text fits in the season.

Our Lord Jesus did more than proclaim the gospel. He was the basis of its content. He came here for us and for the rest of a world lost in sin. We have inherited sin already at birth and add to it our personal record of guilt. We start out life separated from God and do not follow him. We live self-centered lives, opposed to God and his ways. We mistreat others in thought and word and actions. We hate and hurt people. We neglect helping those in need. We puff ourselves up with

pride, trusting our own abilities and efforts as being good enough and push God aside. That is a description of our past but sadly also enters our days now as well.

Jesus took all our sins on himself and suffered the penalty they deserved, which was the misery of hell, even though he was perfect in himself, which was another part of his saving work for us, keeping the law in our place. He has rescued us from sin and its condemnation.

His work for the world comes to us personally by faith. That was why the message needed to get out when he left Capernaum that day and why it still needs to go out to humankind. The Holy Spirit uses the good news of his work for us to turn hearts from unbelief to faith. We come to trust him as the one and only Savior. That puts us in his kingdom and under his rule as he directs everything for us to serve for our spiritual benefit, even the difficulties in our lives. In his kingdom we experience his power and know his compassion.

There's even more in store. That kingdom of grace we are currently in as believers becomes the kingdom of glory when we leave this life. Heaven is then the home of our soul until the end of the world. Our body is raised on Judgment Day and reunited with the soul for all eternity. Talk about an impact! Heaven brings a change from a life filled with troubles and sickness and sins to a perfect existence with all the negatives gone and only joy and blessings to experience.

So hear the message of your Savior. Be in his kingdom by faith. Experience his compassion and power in life through the gospel message as you gather in God's house and as you spend time in his Word at home. And look forward with eagerness to the life he has prepared for you in the heavenly mansions.

Jesus makes a definite impact on your life, a powerful one. He impacts each day now on earth and eternally in heaven. Yes, faith is vital and valuable. Without it we have nothing that really lasts. With it we have what we need most. Never view your church life as routine or a duty. Be in and stay in faith. Keep growing closer to Jesus. Enjoy the blessings!