

Disease

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Date: 30 April 2017

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[0 : 00] Medical science is a great thing, isn't it? I mean, aren't you grateful that you live in an age of hospitals and painkillers and x-rays and antibiotics?

I mean, when you look back at history and you look at the kind of scant medical knowledge that they had then, aren't you thankful that you live in an age where doctors generally know what they're talking about and know what they're doing?

Which, by the way, wasn't always the case. For most of the world's history, doctors pretty much made it up as they went along. For example, if you had a disease back in the day, conventional wisdom for a long time was to just, this is serious, the doctor said, well, we'll just drain your body of its blood and the disease will go away.

And sometimes that method did cure the disease, but a common side effect was unfortunately that the patient died from lack of blood. And the doctors didn't quite know why this was happening.

So we can be thankful just how far medical science has come over the past few centuries. And yet, despite how far it's come, with all the scopes that we have in the machines and the medicines and the clever doctors, did you know that we still to date haven't found a cure for the common cold?

[1 : 20] Something as simple and common and frequent as that. You see, for all medical science can do for us and can do a lot, we need to realize there's still so much that it can't do for us.

In fact, a majority of diseases today still have no cure. To name but a few, asthma, eczema, arthritis, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and of course the killers, cancer and HIV.

And there's so many. These are just a few, and chances are that you know someone who suffers from a disease such as these. Or maybe you yourself have an ongoing medical condition that you may have to deal with for the rest of your life.

And it gets to you, doesn't it? When the doctor, when you sit in the doctor's office, and they've done all the tests, and he says to you, well, there's really not much we can do. We can maybe make you comfortable.

We can maybe delay the effects, but we can't do much more than that. And you've put your hope in medicines and doctors to cure you, and yet they say, well, it's out of our hands.

[2 : 26] And it gets to you, doesn't it? I mean, sure, the common cold that you know is going to pass is more an irritation than anything else. But having a long-term condition that doesn't go away eventually gets to you deep down inside.

It can depress you. It can make you want to give up living. And if you've been through a long-term illness, you'll probably know what I'm talking about. And worst of all, as a Christian, it may even make you want to give up on God.

It might make you wonder whether God really cares about you, whether he even exists at all. And that's why this morning it's important for you to know that God is not silent about your problem if you suffer from a medical issue.

And you know what? Most people do at one stage in their life, suffer from a medical issue that doesn't go away very easily. And God is not silent about it. The Bible has loads to say about sickness and disease.

And when we open the Bible and we look what it says, not only does it actually tell us why we suffer in the first place, but also it tells us how our diseases can be cured in a way that medical science can never do.

[3 : 35] And so I encourage you to pay attention for the next few minutes as we look at what the Bible teaches. And there's just two points that I want to look at this morning. And the first is why.

Why do we suffer from diseases in the first place? And we get a clue in the passage that was read earlier from Luke 4. So I hope you've got your Bibles open in front of you.

And I'll tell you just a bit about the context of what's going on in this passage. Jesus is visiting his new friend Simon, later who comes to be known as Peter. And he finds out that Simon's mother-in-law is suffering from what Luke calls a very high fever, which is an indicator of something seriously wrong with her.

Now in this time, high fevers more often than not didn't end well. But Simon and his friends have already at this time, they've only known Jesus for a short time, they've already witnessed that he can do incredible things, that he has some kind of power.

And so they think, well, maybe he can help this woman. Well, it turns out as we read the story, not only does he help her, but he exceeds all their expectations. And he heals her instantly and completely just by saying a few words.

[4 : 45] Now this is an amazing event. And we find out that, as you can imagine, it causes quite a stir in this little village that Jesus is at. The people start rocking up at Jesus' door with all their sick and infirm people with any kind of disease or sickness in the village.

And sure enough, we find out Jesus comes to each one of them. He doesn't go, no, sorry, I'm busy, I'm taking the night off. He comes, he lets each one in, and he heals them completely, every single person who comes to him.

It's an amazing event, unprecedented in world history. And it's an event in which Jesus shows us in this one night, and he's only beginning to show us if you read the rest of the Gospels, but in this one night he shows us that he is just no ordinary person.

That he carries divine authority over forces that normally rule over us, like death and disease.

Forces that we can't control, that we have no say over Jesus, just tells them to go away, and they do.

What authority that is. What an amazing event. But what I'd like to do this morning, just to answer our questions, I'd like to pause and rewind a few verses back in the story, to the moment that Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law.

[5 : 59] Have a look at it. I want you to notice how Luke describes just what Jesus did to heal her. Now Luke, by the way, who wrote this Gospel, was a medical doctor.

And no doubt he was interested in how the fever was cured. But look at what he writes. He writes, Jesus rebuked the fever. Now that's not normally the way you cure a disease, is it?

Or cure a condition. I mean, imagine. Imagine rocking up at your GP's office. And you're complaining of a chest problem, say. And you come into his office and he sits you up on the bed and takes your shirt off and uses that, what is it?

It's stethoscope, is it? Stethoscope. He listens to your chest. Breathe in, breathe out. He looks down your throat with one of those little wooden things. He asks you how long you've been suffering from the condition. He tests your back.

And then after a while, after examining you, he steps back and says, Yes, I think I know what the problem is and I'm pretty sure we can sort you out. And you expect him to go get some medicines or write a prescription.

[7 : 02] But instead he raises his hand and says, Chest pain, I rebuke you. And then he says, We'll send the bill to your medical aid. Thank you very much. I mean, that's not the normal way doctors cure diseases, is it?

But that's what Jesus did, yeah. And I think it's a clue, isn't it? See, Jesus wants us to realize that there's a spiritual side to physical disease and sickness.

You see, to rebuke something has a spiritual aspect to it. It's spiritual language. In fact, Jesus heals this disease in the exact same way as he deals with demons later in verse 41.

He rebukes them. The exact same word is used. Because, you see, to Jesus, demons and diseases are not very different. They have the same root cause, a spiritual cause. There's a spiritual problem underlying.

That is what Jesus is wanting us to know. And so what is it? What is this apparent spiritual cause that underlies disease? Because if that's true, then it has a huge bearing for how we deal with disease and sickness, if it actually has a spiritual cause behind it.

[8 : 10] Well, as we answer that question, we've got to understand that there are two pretty much extreme schools of thought in our world when it comes to the connection between the spiritual world and the physical world.

And the one extreme is popular, secular, Western thinking. That doesn't recognize any links at all between the spiritual and the physical. So it treats diseases and sickness purely in the physical realm with medicines and surgery and things like that.

And, of course, medicines are often helpful. But we've already seen how limited they actually are in getting rid of most of the world's diseases. That's on the one extreme, where there's absolutely no connection between spiritual and physical.

On the other extreme, there you've got the witch doctors. And there you've got Mr. Ahmed, whose flyers are posted on telephone poles, who claim to be able to fix any disease through spiritual means, as well as help you with court cases and marriage problems and all the rest.

And so which is it? You know, is there no connection between the physical and the spiritual, like secular thinking would say? Or is there a direct spiritual cause behind all physical suffering and therefore all disease can be dealt with spiritually?

[9 : 22] Which is it? Which do you take it to be? Well, let's see what Jesus says. That's always helpful. And we find a very helpful passage a few pages on in Luke.

I invite you to turn the beginning at Luke 13, verse 1. And what's happening in Luke 13 is that Jesus is commenting to his disciples and his listeners.

He's got quite a following by now, these sort of nine chapters later. Quite a following. He's been doing amazing things. And people flock to him to hear his teaching. And he's commenting on some news items of the day.

First, there was an atrocity that was carried out by the Roman overlords who murdered a number of Galileans. And that was in the news. But then a separate incident, there was a disaster where 18 people died after a tower had collapsed and fallen on them.

And now the belief of the day is that the victims of these events must have sinned in some way and God was punishing them. That's what the Jewish thinking said.

[10 : 23] That God was punishing these people because they were suffering in this way. I.e., the assumption was there was a direct spiritual cause to physical suffering.

You see that? Well, look at what Jesus has to say about them. From verse 2. Jesus answered, Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?

I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those 18 who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them. Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

I tell you no. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Okay, so this is a very helpful answer to us when we consider what Jesus is saying.

Now, this passage isn't specifically talking about disease. But the same principle applies. You see, Jesus is saying disasters in life, whether that's a falling tower or contracting a disease, aren't necessarily because of a particular sin someone's done.

[11 : 27] Because, he implies here, when it comes to sin, he says everyone's in the same boat. But we've all turned away from God, naturally. And so we all need to turn back. Repent.

That's what repent means. Turn back to God. And the Bible says that over and over again. The Bible says there's no one righteous, not even one. The Bible says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

If towers fell on those who sinned, towers would be falling all over the place. You wouldn't be able to walk to ShopRite without a few towers falling. If sickness is the result of sin, then we would all be sick 24-7.

And that is what Jesus is implying here. And he says, no, physical suffering is not the direct result of particular sins. And therefore, it's unhelpful to treat every sickness by trying to find a particular spiritual cause.

However, that said, he still wants us to remember here that sickness and natural disasters and suffering nonetheless do have a spiritual cause behind them, namely our broken relationship with God.

[12 : 30] And we learn this, for example, in the book of Romans. Romans, you don't have to turn there, but Romans 5 verse 12 says, Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin.

And in this way, death came to all people because all sinned. So you see the connection between death and sin. Before sin, there was no death. Before sin entered the world, the world was just the way God made it without us messing it up.

But after sin came into the world through Adam and through his choice, really on behalf of the whole human race, it was once sin came and we decided to go our own way and turn away from God.

And we all have the sin in Adam in us because we all do that by nature. It's then that death came. When that sin came into the world, that's when death came and disease and suffering, all the things that accompany death entered into our world as well, which, of course, is what happens when you break relationship with the giver of life, isn't it?

If you want nothing to do with the giver of life, then life as it should be will disappear and death and disease and sin and brokenness will enter in its place. And so disease does have a spiritual cause, you see?

[13:42] And that spiritual cause is sin. But that doesn't mean each particular disease you have is the result of a particular sin you've committed. You understand? It's like the rust on my car.

I always use my car's rust as illustrations in sermons just because it always comes up. And I'm always thinking about how to fix it. But, you see, the rust on my car is a general result of oxygen and moisture in the atmosphere over the years.

It's not a particular result of me parking my car at the beach that one time. Okay? I can't pin down a specific cause for my car's rust, but rather a general cause that exists in our world.

And it's the same with disease and sickness. We mustn't look for specific spiritual causes, but we must acknowledge the general spiritual cause behind it all. There may be no sin which causes you to suffer sickness, specific sin, but rather the fact that you suffer is a general result of living in a world that's turned away from God.

And that is what the Bible teaches about our disease and our sickness and our suffering. And it's important to understand that. As I said, it's important to know the underlying cause of something if we're to deal with it properly in our lives.

[14:50] It means, for example, that we can and should treat the physical ailments with physical means that we're given. Medicines and doctors and whatever resources we have, rather than Dr. Ahmed's potions and spells.

But at the same time, we've got to realize, as we do that, and as we go to the doctor and as we take medicines, we've got to realize that no amount of medicines and doctors and hospitals will remove the root cause of the problem.

You see, we can deal with the symptoms, but we can't deal with the root cause of the problem, which is a broken world, which is sin. And so we shouldn't pin our hopes on medical science to undo the brokenness of the world.

No matter how many new inventions there are, no matter how much research is done, it can't do that. It can't address the root cause of the problem, which leads to disease and suffering in the first place.

Just as much as, you know, me painting over the rust on my car is not going to solve the underlying problem. It might hide the problem, it might delay me having to deal with the problem, but it's not going to solve the underlying problem.

[15:53] It won't take it away. Doctors and medicines might delay or reduce the effects of disease for a time, but they can't fix the root cause of the disease. We've got to understand that. But secondly, we've got to know that there is someone who can fix the root cause of our suffering and our sickness and our disease, and that is Jesus Christ.

That is why Jesus came to earth. Jesus came to earth not just to address the symptoms of sin in healing people and in curing things, which he did, but he went further than that, and he addressed the root cause of disease, which is sin.

And so let's turn back to Luke 4, and we see this when Jesus heals all these people. So we've looked at the real cause of disease.

Now I want us to consider the real cure for disease. So on this one night, right, Jesus made it quite clear that he has power to remove disease better than any doctor could.

But then as we read on, something very strange happens. From verse 42. At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him, and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

[17:16] But he said, I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent. And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Now this is very unexpected. Just think of the situation. Jesus has become literally an overnight sensation. He can heal incurable diseases with a word.

And people must have been, this news must have spread to all the surrounding villages and further afield. But the very next morning, after this amazing night, Jesus is nowhere to be seen.

People must have been searching for him, looking for him. And they started looking for him. No doubt there were still sick people who hadn't made it the night before. Maybe there were more sick people coming from neighboring villages, coming with their sick after this news.

And so they searched for Jesus. There's a huge search party out for Jesus. And eventually they find him alone in a solitary place, we're told. And they tell him that he must come back, and he must carry on healing, obviously.

[18:15] And you know what he does? He says no. He doesn't come back. Even though there are people who still need him. You see, what we don't often realize about Jesus is that for all the healing that he did, and he did amazing healings, but for all the healing that he did, there were a whole lot of people that Jesus left unhealed in Israel and in this world.

Why? You know, did he fail his mission? No, because it's right here in this passage that we find out why he left so many people unhealed, because it turns out he didn't actually come to earth to heal people of their diseases.

He had the power to, and he had compassion on people who came to him, and so he did. But that's not the primary reason that Jesus came to earth. Rather, he says here why he came to earth.

Do you see why? He came to earth, he says, to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. To him, to Jesus, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God was more important even than healing people of their incurable diseases.

And the reason is because Jesus knew that no matter how many people he healed, that would only ever be a temporary fix. And these people who he healed would still grow old.

[19:36] They would still probably get other diseases, and they would still eventually die. But the good news of the kingdom of God that Jesus came to preach is the news of how people can find permanent healing from the root cause of their disease, which is sin.

And so that's why he knew it was far more important to tell them this good news. And now, why? Because this good news of the kingdom is news of a coming world, a new world, a restored creation in the future, without sin, without disease, without suffering, without death.

The world that God always intended for his creatures. God didn't intend ultimately for us to live in this broken world. He knew it would happen. He knew we would turn from him. But that's not the end game.

That's not God's end game. God's end game is the good news of the kingdom, which is a whole new world, the world that we all deep down inside know that we should be in. We know that this world is not how it's meant to be.

I'm sure if I asked you, do you think this world is how it's meant to be? You would probably agree it's not. But how do you know? How do you know what it's meant to be? Deep down inside, we've all got this knowledge that there's meant to be something more than this.

[20:45] There's meant to be something better. That's the knowledge that God has put in you because you're right. This world is meant to be better than this. And that's God's intent.

But more than this, the good news of the kingdom is not just the news of this coming perfect world. It's also the news of how sinners like you and me can have our sins forgiven so that we can be part of that new world.

So that we don't have to die eternally for our sins. That we can be part of new life and have new life as it was meant to be. That is the good news of the kingdom. Can you see why Jesus wanted to preach that?

I mean, have you ever heard better news than that? And Jesus not only came to preach it, he came to show that he has authority. That he came from heaven. And that this news is real. It's not just some guy making up a new religion.

This is real. Jesus showed that he had the authority to preach this news. And we can believe him. The news that we can be forgiven for our sins.

[21:49] Our sins which are the root cause of our diseases and our suffering and death. We can be forgiven and that we can come back into relationship with God. And of course, that happened. That is made possible through the death of Jesus on the cross.

When he died for the sins of his people. When he took the sins and punishment on himself so that we can have his righteousness. And that we can start again. That we can come into a new life because of his death on the cross.

And so far more important than Jesus healing a few people. Was for him to proclaim the way God has made for us to find true permanent healing of all of our diseases. And that is possible.

It is very real. It seems impossible, doesn't it? It seems impossible. True. True. Forever healing of my diseases. To be taken away completely. Really?

Does that mean that when I become a Christian. When I come to Jesus. I'll be healed of all of my diseases. Well the answer might shock you. Yes it does. Yes it does.

[22 : 49] Jesus guarantees. That for his people he will heal all of their diseases. And sicknesses. In Psalm 103. Which Adrian opened with this morning. Listen to what it says. The Lord will forgive his people's sins.

And heal all their diseases. That's what it says. Black and white. Isaiah 53. Talking about Jesus says. By his wounds we are healed. And now God doesn't make promises like that and not keep them.

Or claim that he was just talking figuratively. No. God will heal all of your physical diseases if you come to Jesus. He promises that. But here's the thing.

And this is where people often get it wrong. He doesn't promise to do that right away. He will do it. If not in this life. Then in the new creation.

Barry expressed to us earlier. That's the knowledge he has. That's the hope he has. He knows he will be healed. He just doesn't know when. Because he's put his trust in Christ. And so at worst for a Christian.

[23 : 47] It's only a matter of time. Before you're completely healed. How come we don't get depressed by having a cold? Because we know it's going to end. We know it's uncomfortable.

It's horrible. Jean and I both had colds this last week. We don't like having colds. But you know what? We don't go moping around and go. Woe is me. I have a cold. Life is not worth living. No. Because we know it's temporary. Well that's the view that Christians can have about all diseases. Even the ones that doctors call terminal. That for a Christian. It's only a matter of time.

Before you are completely healed. And furthermore. If you are a Christian. And you suffer from an ongoing disease in this life. Not only do you have the guarantee of future healing. But you can know. That there's a reason God has allowed your disease to continue for a time.

And that reason. The Bible says is for your ultimate good. You see God promises in his word. Romans 8.28. That in all things. Even diseases. He is working for the good of those who love him.

[24 : 46] In James 1.2. He says. There's counted joy when we face trials of many kinds. Because through those trials. God is working on our faith and character. To make us mature and complete. In preparation for the coming kingdom.

There's a reason behind it. Even if you don't know what that reason is. And that is the hope that Christians can have in the faith. In the face of death. And disease. And that is a life transforming hope.

Let me tell you. If you have that hope. It transforms how you look at your suffering. It transforms how you look at diseases. It transforms how you live your life. And what you live for. In this world. And so as I close this morning.

My question to you. Is do you have that hope? Ask yourself. Have you had your sins against God forgiven. Through Jesus' death on the cross.

Yet. Have you come to him in repentance and faith? Have you turned back to God. And come into a relationship with your creator. Through Jesus Christ. Because if you haven't yet.

[25 : 43] If you don't have that hope. Then sickness and disease. And the sufferings of this life. Are there to serve as warnings to you. Wake up calls. Just as they were for the people of Jesus' day.

And his words to them. That we read earlier. Are as vital for you to hear today. Unless you repent. Unless you turn from your sins. And turn to Jesus. You too will perish.

That's the warning. That our diseases serve as. And so take those words to heart. Repent. Come to Jesus. Find the free forgiveness. That he offers. Through his death on the cross.

Because let me tell you. That's the best treatment advice. That you'll ever get. Let's pray. Yes Lord. We thank you for your word. We thank you that it sheds light.

On our questions. It gives us answers. Lord. Thank you for helping us to see this morning. That there is a reason. That we go through suffering. Thank you.

[26 : 41] That it's a wake up call. To realize the broken state that we're in. But thank you Lord. For sending Jesus. Not only to heal people of diseases. But to come and address the root cause.

To come and die for the sins of his people. Lord. Thank you so much. For your grace. In not leaving us in the mess that we've made for ourselves. But sending the ultimate solution.

The ultimate healing. And Lord. Lord. I pray. That you would help us. To repent. Daily. Help us to follow Jesus. Help us to live in the relationship with you. That you sent Jesus.

For us to enjoy. Help us Lord. To know that you are in complete control. No matter what we face.

And Lord. Would you instill in us. Your people. That great hope. Of the kingdom of God.

The good news. Of the world to come. And help us to live. Always. Looking at that. And with the eyes of our heart. Focused on what's to come.

[27 : 36] Not focused on this broken world. And we pray. All of these things. In Jesus name. Amen.