

Title: “Sent for this Purpose”

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Luke 4:40

1/30/2022

Service Readings: Jer. 1:4-10 (17-19); 1 Cor 12:31b-13:13; Luke 4:31-44

To Jesus, there is no distinction between body and soul. The problems of both find their anchor in the corruption of sin. He was sent to restore, to heal, and to set the captives free.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Self-improvement is big business. In books alone, there were 18.6 million copies sold in 2019. By that same year, there were 85,000 unique titles registered as published. And, again, these statistics are just for books! We spent \$800 million on them! But, when you add other products like applications, audiobooks, coaching and motivational speakers, the United States spent about \$12 billion that year! Twelve billion on improving ourselves.... in one year alone! The message from these statistics is crystal clear – humans know that they are flawed, that they are not living to their full potential. We know that we are too tired, too slow, too drained of energy. We know that we should be smarter, healthier, happier. We know that we are not all that we *should* be and so we search for a remedy because there *must* be one out there, somewhere. Otherwise, why would we be yearning for it? If this is all we are to be; if this is the *best* we are to be, then we should be happy and content. But we aren't happy and content. We are anxious for what we *know* must be a better *us*. We must just try harder, believe stronger, make better decisions, find the right mix of habits, and make ourselves become the better *us* we know we can be. All this is fine and even good, but I bring it up because the drive to improve our physical and mental health stems from a deeper motivation, a deeper realization that each *us* is more than just the sum of our mental and physical capabilities. There is something additional, something additive and whatever *that* is, we *also know* that it is not living at its full potential. And so, we look outside the material world and towards the metaphysical one. Non-Christians speak into the universe or to mother earth in search of spiritual healing. Others look to religions where manmade gods serve them in exchange of offerings of food and incense. Still others force themselves to reject the idea of a spiritual entity and to suppress any need for improvement. But just like the physical, humans know that they are flawed, that there is something more to them than the organs that make up their bodies and the mind that controls it. And they know that whatever *that* is, it is something that needs improvement, healing, and restoration of some kind. And so, mankind continues in its quest. We buy books and we look for ideologies and theologies that are much bigger than us.

This is the way of humans, but it wasn't always like this. Mankind wasn't created with this realization that there was something wrong, that there was something that needed to be improved. We were created complete, whole, in the image of God. We were created lacking nothing physically, mentally, or spiritually. But when sin entered the world through Adam, creation became corrupted, and something happened to us – both physically, mentally, and spiritually and ever since

then we have been searching for a healer: either inside or outside ourselves. And millions of dollars later, the world still searches.

But our gospel passage stands in stark contrast to the exploration of the world. I'd like to read a portion of it, starting in verse 33:

³³ In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ³⁴“Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

³⁵ “Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

³⁶ All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!” ³⁷ And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

³⁸ Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

⁴⁰ At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. ⁴¹ Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

The first thing to point out is that this passage supports the claims of the world: we *are* flawed, we *are* in need of restoration. *Something* is wrong with us and we *need* to be healed. And so, this is a great passage to show Non-Christians when they make those claims. We can turn to Luke and say, “yes! I agree with you. We are not living the full life we were made to live. People are possessed with demons; there is sickness; there is death.” None of that is in dispute. But what *is* disputed is the **source** of healing. From where does that come? From the universe? Do we turn to these books that teach us to work harder, that the power can be found from within ourselves? If we listen to the teachers of the world, these are exactly the sources from where we should find these solutions. We must try harder; we must work harder; we must believe stronger.

But this passage answers that question quite clearly. It is not from within ourselves or from anything of this world. Jesus is our master healer, sent from heaven to heal us. Sometimes this includes a physical healing, and sometimes it does not. And that's the point. Jesus didn't come to heal our physical ailments, to improve our memory or give us more energy. He didn't come to improve our financial standings. We can't “speak our physical healing in the name of Jesus” and expect that he will bow to our commands. We can't dictate to him that because we have faith like a mustard seed he should open the doors for that promotion or for improved obedience from our kids. He came because he knew that much deeper than those needs was a disease far more deadly, eternally deadly than anything we could even experience in this world. God knew the diagnosis and he also knew the prognosis. We were fatally marred, headed for eternal death. Sin had corrupted us and turned us away from him and turned us towards ourselves. And he also knew that we were

unable to heal ourselves, unable to turn back towards him as the source of spiritual healing and so he didn't supply us with any self-help remedies. All of Scripture points not to ourselves as the source of restoration but to Jesus – the Son of God who could do for us what we could not do for ourselves. There on the cross, Jesus *became* that which had corrupted us. He *became* our illness and suffered the symptoms on our behalf. And then he *became* the remedy, the answer that we had been searching for. His death and his resurrection healed us and through faith turned us towards him. It gave us the medicine that we so desperately needed. His body. His blood. He is our master healer, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. And he offers us this healing at his table. He says "Take. Eat. For the forgiveness of your sins. For *this* is your true illness. I am your healer. I have done for you what you could never do. Your soul has been healed. Your sins have been forgiven. Your eternal life has been saved. You have been resurrected from the dead and have been made whole."

Will your children now be obedient to you? Will your physical illness disappear? Will that promotion that you so desperately need be realized? That's not what Jesus promises you. He doesn't promise you a life free from sadness or illness or anxiety or pain. He doesn't promise you a life empowered by your own will. What Jesus promises you is this: a life at the foot of his cross. It is a life where sin still interferes, and Satan still has his way. He promises you a life on your knees. A life emptied of self and dependent on him. And when you live your life this way; when you have emptied yourself of everything you cannot control, cannot fix, cannot change. When you empty yourself *of yourself* and present to him an empty vessel.... Our lord promises to fill it with himself. He promises to take the pains and anxieties of your world and make them his own. He promises that he is your master healer and that you can trust your life in his hands. He promises.

<pause>

Are you looking to lose some weight or improve your confidence? Would you like to remember people's names or decrease your desire to buy things? Maybe you would like to live healthier? There are 85,000 books to choose from and many of them will help with these problems, but not a single one will help with the real illness that you and I have. Not a single one will provide you with what you really need. You need Jesus. You need his healing. You cannot do this on your own. And where do you find him? You find him in the reading and the hearing of God's Word and through the gifts of himself that he offers at his table. For it is there, in the Word and at the table where God sends the master physician directly to you and it is where you find true healing.

Do you want his promises? Do you want his healing? There's a book for that and it doesn't cost a single penny, but it does cost you your self-focused life. Will you receive it?

Please pray with me.

Lord,

You are our master physician, our master healer. We praise you for the work that you have done on our behalf to restore us to our Father. Our soul is healed, our sins forgiven, and our eternal life secured. Help us live in this confidence and share it with others. In your name we pray.

Amen.