

Miracles of Jesus 12-05-06b

We continue our study of the miracles of the Lord Jesus. We have covered at least the physical details of His restoration of Peter's mother-in-law. And I just wanted to summarize by noting that not only is this a wonderful blessing for Peter, and certainly for the mother-in-law, and for the wife, and for those who are assembled, but there is a purpose manifest in this, because the last verb there is diakoneo.

She arose, or was having arisen, and served them. And you see that it wasn't just a superfluous thing. She had a service that she could perform.

I'm sure that she was grateful. It doesn't say that she fell down at His feet and kissed Him, or went out and ran and told her neighbors. What did she do? How did she express her gratitude? Her gratitude and the manifestation of her healing was service.

And this is a great way to respond. When we see the work of the Lord in our lives, that's a great response to serve, to find a way to be useful, to use whatever talents and abilities and opportunities God gives to us. It's one thing to say that you're thankful.

It is another thing to demonstrate that you are thankful. So she does this. And there is, in a larger sense, an interesting sort of symbolism here.

We have seen in the miracles thus far that Jesus invested the miracle at the wedding feast with significance in using the water pots, which He didn't have to use. He could have refilled the wine skins or whatever the wine was stored in. He could have refilled everybody's cups for the duration of the feast.

It could have been like the widow's cruise of oil. The more people drank, the more the cups just filled back up. But He chose to use those 12 water pots.

And we saw the symbolism and the significance and the import of the water and the jars, the reflection of the Old Testament shadows and the Old Testament minimal effectiveness traditions transformed into living, dynamic reality. In the same way here, we see that, first of all, this is a woman who is a mother. We don't know if Peter and his wife had any children or not.

It could have been a child that was ill here, but it wasn't. It's his wife's mother, which means she is a mother. And this is a detail you cannot overlook.

She is someone's mother. She has had a child, and she has a particular affliction. It's not a demon possession.

It's not leprosy. It's not blindness. It's not anything else.

It is a fever. And this fever renders her inactive. It oppresses her.

It throws her down and makes her unable to function. When she is restored, she does her function, which is diakoneo. It is ministry.

Her ability to minister, to be the matriarch of that household. Notice it says it is Peter and Andrew's house. And this is a familial dwelling.

She is probably the lady who oversees much of what goes on. If they have servants or others, if they have logistics, she's the one that does it. And she is restored.

And as soon as she is restored, she gets right back to her duties and responsibilities, her opportunity to serve. But she is a woman, and Jesus rebukes this fever that has rendered her helpless. And you can't help but think back to the first woman who became a mother and who was afflicted through sin, ejected from the garden.

Eve was the first to commit a sin in the human race. Adam was formed first and then Eve. But Eve was the first to partake of the fruit and be deceived.

And God pronounces in the garden this prophetic word that the seed of the woman is going to be at enmity with the seed of the serpent. Disease is a part of the curse that goes all the way back to the garden. There wouldn't be fevers, there wouldn't be leprosy, there wouldn't be afflictions except for that fall.

And the idea of Balaam being cast down, being caused to fall, to be thrown down, to be prostrated, to be rendered ineffective, this is what sin does to us. This is what the curse does to us. The Lord Jesus Christ, in touching us, in taking our hand, and lifting us up, raising us up, enables us to serve.

So there is a lot of symbolic value in this very briefly communicated action on the part of the Lord Jesus. And in the Gospel of Mark, it is followed immediately in the account by verse 32, "...at evening when the sun had set, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed." Why did they wait until the sun had set? What day is it? It's the Sabbath, right? It's the Sabbath. The day of the casting out of the demon, the day of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, two different areas of consequence for the incursion of sin and evil into the world, takes place on the Sabbath.

And you know what the Sabbath is in human history. It is the thousand-year millennial kingdom, where Israel will be raised up and will be able to diakoneo, will be freed from the curse and enabled to serve. So, "...at evening when the sun had set," the Sabbath is over.

This is now going to be Sunday. "...they brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed." They didn't want to break the Sabbath by carrying or bringing, otherwise conveying or traveling. So, those who are sick and those who are demon-possessed, the very two categories that he has already addressed the preceding day, before the sun went down.

"...He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, and he did not allow." E-A-O is the word for allow. That's the word the demons spoke. Jesus did not allow them to speak that they knew him.

It's Hati, did not allow them to speak that they knew who he was. Now, in the morning, this is still Sunday, but the sick have been healed and have gone away. The demon-possessed have been cleansed and have gone away.

"...In the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, he went out and departed to a solitary place, and there he prayed." How did the Lord Jesus in his humanity remain focused and remain centered? There's manifestations of the power of God, the healing and dominating work of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ himself has been in evidence in case after case after case. Very heady experience in human terms. What does Jesus do? It's a good idea for us to do.

After anything of great significance happens, he arose early, before there was any more circumstance, any more distraction, any more human interaction. He goes off by himself and communes with his Heavenly Father, meditates on the Word of God, expresses it in prayer, centers himself, focuses himself. We've got to remember to do this.

We get carried away with excitement over things, resolution of problems, introduction of new problems, and many times we've got to sacrifice some time and maybe some sleep to ensure that we can have individual communion and fellowship, meditation and prayer, one-on-one with the Lord God in Heaven. That's what Jesus did. Solitary place.

Simon and those who were with him searched for him. When they found him, they said, Everyone is looking for you. You're popular.

Remember, this is Capernaum. They're anxious for the healing. It doesn't say that many believed.

It doesn't say that many sought to follow him. They just really liked that healing. He said to them, Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there.

He didn't say that I may heal there, that I may cast out demons there. What has happened? Because of this healing and exorcism session, everybody is distracted. Jesus can't get anybody to pay attention to his preaching and teaching, and there's no belief response.

So he says, Let's go to the next town so I may preach there, because for this purpose I have come forth. Jesus could say, Wow, look at the way God is using me. Look at the ministry God is giving me in eradicating disease and demons out of this region.

This must be my calling, because I've had opportunity and I've had success. This must be what I should do. And we very quickly construe opportunity and success as the

leading of God.

How did Jesus know that that wasn't his mission? Well, among other things, he went out by himself and prayed and communed with the Father. And when the disciples caught up with him and said, Hey, there's a lot more people standing in the wings waiting for you to do today what you did yesterday. Jesus said, We're leaving.

I didn't come to heal and cast out demons per se. I came to communicate, to preach. Jesus is focused on his mission, focused on his message.

And you know what this does? This is one of the greatest victories in Scripture, because the demons failed. The demons failed to deflect the Lord Jesus from his primary mission. And even with success, even with power from on high, to heal and cast out demons, Jesus does not lose sight of why he came.

So critically important for us. Now, miracle number five. After in verse 39, he was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons.

Notice it doesn't say he healed. What did he do? He kept casting out these demons that kept trying to deflect him from his mission, kept trying to speak and get people interested in who he was and what he could do. Now, verse 40.

A leper came to him, imploring him, kneeling down to him, and saying to him, If you are willing, you can make me clean. Then Jesus moved with compassion, stretched out his hand, and touched him, and said to him, I am willing. Be cleansed.

As soon as he had spoken, immediately the lepers, he left him, and he was cleansed. Jesus strictly warned him and sent him away at once and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded as a testimony to them. However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places, and they came to him from every direction.

Well, you can already see some issues here. I'm sure you can already detect some points of application. But let's take a look at the details here.

Once again, context is everything, and you have this miracle of cleansing of the leper in all of the Synoptic Gospels. You have it in Matthew chapter 8. You have it in Luke chapter 5. But we're going to stick with Mark here for the moment, because notice that the focus here is on the Lord Jesus. A leper came to him, imploring him, kneeling down to him, and saying to him, This is not an accident.

If you are willing, you can make me clean. That's six references to Jesus in one verse. Right? Six references.

You know what six is the number of. This is humanity on earth. This is not seven.

It's close, but there are problems. This is the leper. Leprosy, a leper.

Leprosy is a living death. You're dead, you're a dead man walking. You look at it in the Old Testament.

The same rules apply to a leper as apply to a corpse. You can't touch it. If you are a walking corpse, you have got to cover your face and cry unclean, warn people away.

Anybody that touches you is defiled. You cannot enter the community. You can't come in for fellowship.

You cannot come in for worship. You are a pariah and an outcast. You are ostracized.

You are forbidden. You are kept separate. The only thing not dead is that you are not dead.

Everything else about you speaks of death. It is a living walking death. Your flesh dies off of your living bones.

It was an awful affliction. So a leper came to him imploring him. But the focus is on the Lord Jesus.

We find further if you look at the parallel account in Luke that not only did he come to him and implore him and kneel down to him, but he fell on his face before him. And in Matthew it says he worshipped him. All of this, kneeling, falling on his face and worshipping, these are almost a continuous action.

You put these together and you almost get a movie. Here we are going to see the authority of Jesus once again. As I reviewed at the end of the previous miracle, in the Gospel of Mark here in particular, the authority of the Lord Jesus is in view.

Now keep your finger here and just turn back one page. What has Peter through Mark been telling us in this Gospel? In verses 16 through 20, Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw Simon and his brother casting a net. Jesus says, follow me.

Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Jesus speaks, they respond. This is authority over the disciples.

In verses 21 through 28, when he was in the synagogue and the man cries out, the demon says, what have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Jesus rebuked him saying, be quiet and come out of him. And the Spirit does so. Authority over demons.

So we have authority over the disciples, authority over demons. In verse 34, as we just read, he had authority over many demons. No matter how many demons there were, he

spoke to them all.

They all came out. They all had to drop silent. In verses 29 through 34, that whole episode of the mother-in-law and on down through those who in the whole city gathered at the door, Jesus has authority over their diseases.

He heals them all. And in 35 through 39, in the morning when he went out to a solitary place to pray, Simon and those who were with him come for him and say, everyone is looking for you. You need to come in and get back with it.

There's lots more healing and casting out to be done. Jesus has authority over his own destiny. He's not controlled by the popular will.

He's not controlled by the desires of others. He's not controlled by their movements or their requests. He knows who he is.

In communion with his Father, he remembers why he has come and he sticks to his mission. He has authority over his own destiny. Here, we are going to see that he has authority over not just any disease, but a defiling, living death disease.

And this is going to foreshadow the expression of his authority over death itself. But this is in prospect. This is a harbinger, a foreshadowing of things to come.

So, the other interesting thing here is, and I like the account in Mark, particularly because everything comes in sets of four. We talked about the number six and its significance. You remember the significance of the number four? The number four is the number of universality in the earth.

You've got the four directions, the four seasons, the four winds. It speaks of universality of commonality on the earth. And notice, how many things does the leper do here? The leper came, implored, kneeled, and said.

Right? Four things. The leper comes to Jesus, the leper implores Jesus, the leper kneels to Jesus, and speaks to Jesus. What does he speak? Is it a request? Or is it a statement of fact? A statement of belief? If you are willing, you can make me clean.

The man has faith, doesn't he? There's no doubt in his mind. But he recognizes that Jesus has the authority to decide. If you are willing, you can make me clean.

If you're not willing, you won't. But if you're willing, you can. Now, Jesus has a fourfold response.

Look at verse 41. Jesus is moved with compassion, stretched out his hand, touched him, and said. Fourfold approach.

Fourfold response. Right? I am willing. Be cleansed.

As soon as Jesus had spoken, immediately, one of Mark's favorite words, euthus, the leprosy, left him. And he was what? Healed? Cleansed. This is a disease of defilement, a disease that represents those things that separate us from God.

What is the sting of death? What does the Bible say the sting of death is? Sin. And what is the strength of sin? The law. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of it is the law.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin. Paul says, I was alive once apart from the law, Romans 8, but, or Romans 7, but when the law came, sin revived, and I died. The law came, sin revived, I died.

The law, sin, and death. The law of sin and death is revoked and replaced in Jesus Christ with the law of life. It's all reflected here.

So, what does Jesus do? Jesus strictly warned him and sent him away at once and said to him, See that you do the following things. How many things does he tell him to do? Four. There is a fourfold command.

Look at it. Say nothing to anyone. Go your way.

Show yourself to the priest. Offer the things which Moses commands. Coincidence? I don't think so.

Say nothing to anyone. Go your way. Show yourself to the priest.

Offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded as a testimony to them. There is a fourfold approach. There is a fourfold response followed by a fourfold command.

Here's a man of faith. Is he a man of obedience? No. Great man of faith, lousy man of obedience.

However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely. Faith without obedience doesn't get you very far. It compromises and impedes the plan and purpose of God in our lives.

It is not enough to believe. It is not enough to have faith. It is not enough to claim the promises of God and to act on faith in our own behalf.

It requires obedience. Now, this man thinks that the best thing he can do... Is he grateful? Yes. Is he enthusiastic? Yes.

Is he impressed with the Lord Jesus? Yes. Does he desire for all of his friends and family to know these things? Yes. Is there anything wrong with proclaiming the Lord Jesus? Not intrinsically, but if you have a command from the Lord Jesus Christ face to face to say nothing, go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer for cleansing the things that Moses commanded as your testimony, then speaking your testimony is the wrong thing

to do.

Performing your testimony is the command. Don't speak your testimony, perform it. Now, this is a healing based on cleansing, right? And in the law of Moses, under which Jesus and this man are still operating at this time, when are you cleansed? What does the law say about when you are cleansed? Are you cleansed when the leprosy leaves? No, you are cleansed and you are clean when the priest declares you clean.

Leviticus chapter 14, we've been through it many times. You're not clean, it isn't what you see in yourself, it isn't what others see on your skin, it is what the priest says. The priest declares you clean.

There is a ritual that you perform and in the performance of that ritual, where would this man have to go to see a priest and have this ritual take place? In Jerusalem. Jesus has a mission for this man not in Galilee, not in Capernaum, not in his own region, down in Jerusalem, down at the temple. Here's a man that comes down and has to... When's the last time anybody had the ritual performed for the cleansing of leprosy? I doubt it had been done in centuries.

They may have never seen it. This is a testimony that Jesus wants to happen down in Jerusalem. It doesn't happen.

This man never gets there because he disobeys. Now, in various accounts, it tells us that Jesus was moved with compassion on behalf of this man. Jesus says, Be cleansed.

This is the heart of the matter. It is purification. It is separation from defilement.

But this man, motivated by gratitude, by misplaced enthusiasm, gives a verbal testimony. Our testimony is obedience first. And isn't it odd, when Jesus exerts authority over the water, it turns to wine.

When He exerts authority over demons, they obey. When He exerts authority over a fever, it obeys. When He exerts authority over leprosy, it obeys.

When He exerts authority over humans, we disobey. We are the only big problem in creation. Everything else obeys the Lord Jesus without question.

And in Mark's account, in particular, Mark and John both really stress the authority of the Lord Jesus. Remember Mary in John 2 at the wedding feast? Mary says, Do whatever He tells you. She recognizes that this is going to be a function of His authority.

Do what He says. This man does not do what He says. Creation, demons, disease, fevers, all obey.

Leprosy flees at the command of the Lord Jesus. Be cleansed. Sin, evil, death, under the authority, not us.

So the question for us is, by way of application, what have we been commanded? What are the commands that apply to us? We can comfort ourselves and encourage ourselves and commend ourselves on our faith. I know the Word of the Lord. I study the Bible.

I have a grasp of its truths in so many different books and so many different passages. I believe it. I trust it.

The new question for us, the fresh question is, am I obedient? Am I acting in the light of my faith and in the light of the Word of God and in the light of the authority of its truths? It is not enough merely to believe and to assent and even to claim for oneself the truth of God's Word. We must obey. Do the things that it requires.

Jesus puts this man and reminds him of the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures over him. You are a cleansed leper. You need to do the things which Moses commanded.

Old Testament Scripture. Jesus invokes the Scriptures over this man and says, Look, you've got some things you need to do here. That's your testimony.

Oh no, I've got a better idea of what my testimony is. I'm going to yack, yack, yack, yack, yack. I'm going to go around all these people and tell them.

I'm going to make an issue of myself. Look at me. I'm a cleansed leper.

Remember those spots I used to have? I don't have them anymore, do I? Let me show you. I'll roll up my sleeve. I'll pull up my shirt.

Let me show you. Me, me, me. I, I, I. I'm the center of attention.

I'm a cleansed leper. And even though it is done in the name of proclaiming the goodness and the greatness of the Lord, we create a celebrity in ourselves and it appeals to our pride. We decide what would be best instead of heeding the commandment of God.

Enthusiasm and good intentions are no substitute for obedience. Our priorities are, and in this order, priesthood, ministry, ambassadorship. Go show yourself to the priest.

Who's our priest? Who should we be showing ourselves to? We are our own priest. And who is our high priest? The Lord Jesus Christ. So if we are going to go show ourselves to the priest, we are going to be thinking about the judgment seat of Christ.

We are going to be thinking about the Lord Jesus and His evaluation of us. Ministry. If we want to testify, if we want to be a blessing to others, do we do like this man and run around and yak, yak, yak? Or do we obey, take the Word of God to heart and live in its light? Then we are qualified to be ambassadors and our light will shine before men.

They will see our good works, our obedience and glorify the Father. And I will remind you

of the passage. Remember the parable that Jesus tells about the... It's not really so much a parable as an illustration.

He says, before you try to get the moat out of your brother's eye, get the beam out of your own eye, He does not say, don't be taking out other people's moats, does He? Moat removal is a wonderful ministry, but something precedes it. You can't do moat removal until you've taken care of your own obedience. Get the log out of your eye.

Get the two by four or the four by four out of your face. Then you can see clearly to perform ministry. Obedience.

Well, there's much more we can say about this, but we're out of time for this morning. We will close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word and how faithfully and clearly it communicates to us not only our responsibility for belief and for trust, but also for obedience.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will illuminate these things for each one of us. Give us that clear vision as we turn our eyes from Scripture to our own souls and our own hearts. May we be chastened and encouraged and guided and motivated by what we have seen this morning to live the life to which we have been called, the life that the Lord Jesus Christ has made possible for us through His own faithfulness and obedience to Your plan and purpose.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.