

Well last week, we talked about the people of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. We talked about how they had an attitude of entitlement there. We talked about how Jesus was rejected there. In fact, the Bible says that Jesus could do no miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief. And so that's the problem in Nazareth, unbelief.

Unbelief is always a danger in the face of the Gospel's proclamation. But this seems a little more prominent in some of the towns Jesus visits and a little less prominent in others. Today, Jesus is back in Capernaum where He had already been. **Capernaum is where Peter's mother in law lives, so it's not so surprising that they're visiting here again.** Now, the problem Jesus faces in Capernaum isn't unbelief, but here the curse of sin manifests itself in two other ways, namely, demon possession and physical death.

The physical sickness that we see in Capernaum is preliminary condition of physical death. Most of us get sick before we die and sickness is a reminder that death is the eventual destiny that awaits us all. Our bodies are mortal; they are subject to the decay of this world. **When Adam and Eve were first created and the world was good, there was no sin and there was no death.** But the Fall changed all that. Now, there is. Death is reality and so is its ally, sickness.

In this life, God thankfully provides healing vocations in which certain people tend to us in our sufferings. Doctors, nurses, nutritionists, chiropractors are vocations in which individuals serve God by seeking to provide relief and even healing to the body. This world would be a very difficult place without those vocations. Death, illness and suffering would be far more prevalent. And so God uses such people to bring us relief.

At the same time, there are limits to the bodily healing we can experience in this life and we must be honest that sometimes man's scientific pursuits lead him towards too much meddling. The cancer rates back in 1900 were 1 in 80. Today, they're 1 in 3. The Autism rate in 1974 was 1 in 10,000. Today, it's 1 in 50. **You ask the bright minds and authorities of our day what's going on?** What's causing this? And they say we don't know. We're not sure. We're checking into it.

And I am not satisfied by these answers. Man is fiddling around with something. He's somehow gone too far with his technology or his practices or his products. We haven't figured out exactly how and where and why, but something here isn't right. While intentions might have been good, there are times when man just makes a bigger mess of things and then he can't figure out exactly how.

This has always been true. There has always been a powerlessness of humanity to fix its problems. We may suppress one disease through say antibiotics, but then the flip side of that is that we then create superbugs that are immune to all antibiotics. **Some say we have made tremendous advances in disease prevention through vaccinations,** but then the scientists and companies go and use aborted fetal tissue to make the vaccines.

Human ways of counteracting sickness and death always have their problems. Man dreams of a utopian world where he figures out the secret to living forever and conquering the worst of diseases, but some diseases are actually more frequent today than they were a hundred years ago. Ultimately, humanity can only do so much and the world is just too broken to ever be fixed by anything that can be devised among us.

And how broken is the world? Well just look where they find the demon possessed man in the story today. In the Synagogue. The man who is possessed by a demon is there with them in the synagogue. In the place where the Word of God is read; in the place where even Jesus attends “church,” there is a man possessed by a demon. That’s how broken the world is.

You know, back in Jesus’ time, the people were amazed by Him because He had this authority. **Verse 32 says, “And they were astonished at His teaching for His word possessed authority.”** I actually like how this is worded in the original Greek. It says, “Because with authority, His word was.” It sounds so much more powerful and accurate that way. The same thing is said later when he casts out demons. “For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits,” they said of him in verse 36.

See, the unspoken comparison the people were making here was between Jesus and the religious experts of his day. The scribes and Pharisees never spoke with direct authority. They always quoted other rabbis and other teachers. They quoted each other for authority. I’d like to think they quoted the scriptures, but I don’t get the impression they did. At least, not in a way that clearly balanced Law with Gospel.

But Jesus doesn’t quote authority. Jesus is authority. He has the power to do away with sickness. He has the power to reverse death. He has the power to exorcise demons. **And all of this points to His identity as the Son of God because only God has this power.** And all of this only emphasizes that ultimately, sickness isn’t about biology. Sickness is about theology. Sickness is about a creation that’s fallen away from its Creator and is now overcome with the effects of that broken relationship.

Many of the vocations of this world deal with that brokenness – some tend to those who are sick; some work in the field of security; some work in fields of conflict management, some

work in the legal system; some in the health care system; some work in the insurance industry; some work in the armed forces or defense industry and some work in the church. These are all fields that in one way or another tend with the brokenness of our world. And God is active in all of these vocations and He calls workers to each of these vocations. The brokenness must be managed and contained.

And it will be so until the end of the age. **But as Christians, we know that the work of these vocations will not be complete until then as well.** Sickness will never truly be conquered, peace will never perpetually be maintained; natural disasters will never be prevented; protection of consumers will never be complete; strife and discord even among God's people will never cease. Not in this lifetime or in this life. We contain the brokenness, but we cannot resolve it.

Only in Christ do we find this hope. In Christ, the demons and diseases meet their end. As we are limited in this life to subdue them; they are likewise limited to this life in their afflictions. As believers in Christ, they cannot pursue us past the point of death. Jesus is the authority. His word is the authority. He is the one who tells the sea you can come this far and no father; He is the one who determines the measurements of the earth and has commanded the morning since the days of man began.

He is the one who lays down His life for you and picks it up again. He is the one who has felt the sting of death and rendered it powerless. **He is the one who has borne the sins of man and received the due penalty of their wickedness.** In Jesus, we are cleansed of evil spirits and we are healed of diseases. Jesus does not merely contain the brokenness; He removes it. He overcomes cancer. He overcomes autism. In His good and perfect eternity, He brings the statistics of man's diseases down to zero.

What happens in the city of Capernaum today will happen for all the earth in eternity. Jesus will do away with your brokenness. **He will do away with your darkness.** He will turn your mourning into dancing and fill your cup to the brim of blessing. He is the one with authority. He is the one with eternity. He is the one who conquers suffering, demons and death and on the Last Day, so shall you. In His Name. Amen.