JESUS THE HEALER

Luke 5:12–32

Key Verses: 5:31–32

“Jesus answered them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”

Thank you for the opportunity to come and visit Lincoln Park ministry. It is quite a privilege to be called to speak before you on the Lord’s Day. I understand last week you had studied about Jesus calling his first disciples. He said, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people”. But before we can fish for people, there is something very vital that must happen first. We all need to be healed. Jesus is the healer. Jesus came to heal us of all our pains, sorrows, and troubles. Most importantly, Jesus came to heal us of our sins. Today, Jesus meets and heals three different people: a man afflicted with leprosy, a helpless paralytic, and even a wretched tax collector. May God help us to see that Jesus is willing and able to heal us too, not matter what our circumstances. May God help us to put our faith and trust in Jesus the healer.

First, “I am willing… Be clean!” (12-16)

Look at verse 12a. Previously, Jesus had been by the Lake of Gennesaret. He seemed to be moving and teaching throughout the region. While he came to one particular town, he was approached by a man who was covered with leprosy. At that time, leprosy was one of the most feared diseases. It was like a person with HIV/AIDS in our times. Leprosy attacks the skin and nerves, disfiguring a person’s flesh beyond recognition, and leads to death. What is worse, leprosy is contagious. Therefore, lepers were shunned by the community and cast out to live secluded lives. Not only was the physical pain unbearable for a leper, but the emotional turmoil was just as agonizing.

Leprosy is said to be just like sin. Sin makes us very ugly. Sin eats away at our soul until it is destroyed. Sin also spreads from one person to another. Sin separates us from God where we feel alone and abandoned without any hope. The horrible disease of sin leads us to only one place. Romans 6:23a says, “For the wages of sin is death.” If we are in our sins and death is inevitable, what can we possibly do? We can learn from the leprous man by what he did next.

According the verse 12b, “When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, `Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’” This man had tremendous faith. He had a reverent and divine respect for Jesus, calling him `Lord’ and falling prostrate before him. He cried out in desperation, “if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

How did Jesus respond? Seeing this leper’s deep faith, “Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. `I am willing,’ he said. Be clean!’ And immediately the leprosy left him.” We see here the marvelous love and grace of Jesus Christ. Others rejected this leper, did not dare associate with him, and left him to rot and die alone in his condition. But Jesus came and comforted him with a motherly touch. Jesus did not need to touch this man at all, for the power of his word was enough to heal him. But Jesus knew what this man needed most. Unlike others, Jesus assured the leper, “I am willing.” “Be clean!”.

We all too need healing. It doesn’t matter who we are, or where we’re from, or our background or situations, the truth is we are all sinners. Jesus heals us and cleanses us of our disease of sin. We all need to be made clean by coming to Jesus. You might say, “It’s impossible. How can Jesus heal me?” There is no sin or condition that Jesus cannot heal or resolve. One woman had been afflicted with a life of drug and alcohol addiction. She once had a happy life and marriage, but poor small choices turned into bigger problems. It ultimately led her to divorce. She then thrust herself into multiple marriages involving mental and physical abuse. She used drugs, alcohol, and the party life to numb the pain. Sin had penetrated her heart so much that her addiction at times took priority over her children. Then one day she opened a bible that her born-again son left her during his visit. Suddenly, as she read the word of God the hope of Jesus came into her heart. She realized that Jesus, and only Jesus, could help her overcome her addictions. She cried out to him to be healed. Jesus, in his willingness, answered with his healing touch. From that day, she left her life of alcoholism and substance abuse behind, as well as her regret and despair. She found joy in her life again. This woman has now been sober and completely clean for over 20 years. She helps others through their addictions. I praise Jesus who saved and healed my mother. If we also feel too dirty and wretched like a leper, all we need to do is come to Jesus as we are. He will touch us. He is more than willing to heal us.

After this, Jesus ordered the man to go and show himself to the priest as Moses had commanded in the Old Testament. It was a tradition in the law to give a person a clean bill of health, and the opportunity for social restoration. Jesus asked the healed man not to tell anyone about him, but the news still spread around. Crowds continued to flock out to Jesus the healer.

Second, “Friend, your sins are forgiven” (17-26)

On another day, Jesus was out teaching again. Some say this event occurred at the house of Simon Peter in Capernaum. Those that had heard the news of Jesus came out in flocks from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. Look at verse 18. “Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.”

It’s hard for us to understand the struggle of this paralytic personally. Imagine not being able to stand, walk, or perform the simplest of tasks. Imagine all those sets of eyes who stared awkwardly at him because of his condition. It was a very sad life for this paralytic. On this day, Jesus was near. Similar to the leper, this man was desperate to get to him. Jesus was his only hope. He couldn’t get to Jesus himself, so he had to depend on the help of others. When they looked around, there was no easy way to get him to Jesus. Determined to get him to Jesus, they thought creatively outside of the box and designed a construction project of sorts. According to verse 19, they maneuvered their way up on the roof and burst through the tiles, lowering the man down on his mat directly in front of Jesus.

With this sudden commotion, the crowd was probably annoyed. In their minds, they had come to see Jesus but these other men were interfering with destructive behavior and making quite a racket. Even though the roof was caving in over his head and dust filled the room, Jesus reacted in a way that shocked everyone. Look at verse 20. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said, `Friend, your sins are forgiven’.” Jesus did not rebuke them for their uninvited entrance. He didn’t tell them they had to pay Simon Peter’s roof repair bill either. Instead, Jesus saw their genuine faith. Jesus was moved that this group of men went out of their way to help this paralytic who could not help himself. Faith pleases Jesus. No matter what our circumstances are we need to seek out Jesus and believe he can help us. May God help us to come to Jesus by faith. May God also help us to bring others to Jesus who cannot bring themselves.

Even though this paralytic had been brought to be healed, Jesus reacted by simply saying, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” At this, maybe one of the men said, “Are you kidding me, Jesus? His sins are forgiven??What about…?” No one expected this response at all. Still, Jesus made it a point to teach that the paralytic’s real problem was not his paralysis, but his sin. This paralytic may have lived a life of constant grumbling and unthankfulness. His heart may have been hard because of the condition he was in. Nevertheless, he was a sinner like everyone else. He needed his sins healed more than his body.

Most people do not see sin as the most serious problem. Sin is not on the radar at all. We are mostly worried about temporary things like money, a job, good looking clothes, or maybe the best color to paint our house. The other day the screen on my phone cracked. I felt my immediate need was to get a new IPhone 5s. My wife ordered me the 4s. This is all a matter of felt needs vs. real needs. We want things that will make us happy now. But what is our one and only real need in this world? It is the forgiveness of sins. Sin represents our broken relationship with God. Sin paralyzes us to the point where we are powerless and helpless. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 7:19-20, “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is the sin living in me that does it.” Sin takes over our lives, and then it spirals out of control. There is only one who can heal us of our sins and give us the power to overcome ourselves. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul said earlier in Romans 5:6, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

Some of you may know the story of Nick Vujicic, an Australian who was born with no arms and legs. In his youth, he often prayed that God would help miraculously grow them back. This obviously did not happen. It was a very tough life for him early on. But Nick began to see the importance of Jesus and the meaning of the forgiveness of his sins. He knew God may not heal him physically, but most importantly his heart was healed from bitterness. He now realized that God created him this way in order to be used as a blessing to others. At seventeen Nick established a non-profit corporation, “Life Without Limbs.” He has become an influential evangelist and motivational speaker to strengthen those who are weak in the faith. God has enabled him to overcome many obstacles. With just two protruding toes he can drive, write books, play golf, tennis, and even surf and swim. He now has one of the most amazing testimonies to share with the world. Praise Jesus who forgave this man’s sins and healed his soul. If we feel paralyzed in this world, we learn here that we can be healed when we come to Jesus by faith. Let’s throw down all the dependence on the physical and temporary things in our lives. Instead, let’s give thanks to Jesus who heals and forgives all our sins.

Jesus’ message to the paralytic was so beautiful. But not everyone in the crowd was cheering him on. Verse 21 says, “the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus in his divinity knew what they had been thinking already. Jesus declared, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, `I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’” At Jesus’ command, the paralytic suddenly got up, took his mat and went home praising God. It also amazed the crowd who praised God along with him. By healing the paralytic, Jesus proved that he has authority on earth to forgive sins.

Third, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (27-32)

Jesus’ work was not done after healing the paralytic. Look at verse 27a. “After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth.” Tax collectors in the context of Jesus’ times were known as wretched, selfish people. They were labeled as public sinners with the likes of prostitutes, the immoral and ungodly people. Working under the authority of Rome, they were considered to be sell-outs and traitors, extorting money dishonestly from their own Jewish people.

As an unpopular sinner, Levi must have been a very lonely person. Being a hated member of the society, he surely was scowled at by those passing by. He was alone sitting in his tax collector booth. Look at verse 27b. “`Follow me,’ Jesus said to him.” Jesus was calling Levi to be one of his twelve disciples. Why would Jesus call such a person? As we’ve seen with the leper and paralytic, Jesus sees people differently than just by outward appearances and circumstances. Jesus sees the heart. He saw hope and potential in Levi. His call, “Follow me”, was actually a challenge for Levi to repent. In order to follow Jesus, Levi had to leave his selfish life behind completely. It was a call to a new life of faith. Jesus call, “Follow me”, was an opportunity for Levi also to be healed.

How then did Levi respond? It would not be an easy or comfortable life in following Christ. Yet according to verse 28, “…Levi got up, left everything and followed him.” Levi heard Jesus’ call and obeyed immediately. Levi was ready to follow and learn from Jesus the Messiah. He was ready to turn away from his past life with no regrets. When Levi made this decision of faith to follow Jesus, there was something amazing that happened. This selfish man now suddenly gained the heart to serve and host others. He sacrificed what he could, spending the money he once idolized, and threw a great banquet for Jesus. It was likely full of prime rib, roast lamb, varieties of desserts, and delicious wine. He invited his tax collector posse, along with other sinners in the neighborhood. It like the crowd at Delilah’s coming to hang with Jesus as their guest of honor. What a joyful time it was.

Nearby, those legalistic Pharisees and teachers of the law criticized Jesus and his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” The religious leaders did not have room in their heart for such people. Yet, Jesus wanted to spend time with all kinds of sinners like he did with Levi. He wanted to heal them of their sins and transform their lives. In verse 31-32, “Jesus answered them, `It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’” Jesus declares himself here a spiritual doctor. When he meets us, he doesn’t intend to leave us in our sins. Even though at times we may feel that we are struggling and can’t overcome, God in His love is exceedingly patient with us. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Jesus the healer changed Levi the tax collector into a sacrificial servant and bold apostle. He also became the gospel writer, Matthew who authored the beautiful Sermon on the Mount. We know that if Jesus healed and changed Levi, he can heal and change anyone. You see Jesus loves each of us. Even if we are sick in sin, He wants to be with us. He wants to spend time with us. What a beautiful invitation. When we turn away from our sinful life and turn completely to Jesus, he will indeed heal us.

Growing up, I was in a dysfunctional family after my parents’ divorce. My sister and I lived among the alcoholism and abuse that my mother was dealing with. I despised my step-father, and just shut myself alone in my room. My philosophy of life hinged upon finding some form of love. For me, I thought it was the perfect fairy tale romance that could ease that pain. But I became so fearful of rejection I could never approach any girl. When things didn’t go right I began cursing God. I blamed him for my difficult life. Even though I maintained a good guy and happy image, I was very dark on the inside. Ultimately, it led to my rebellion in college. I had vowed never to drink alcohol in my life after seeing its effects on my family. But I ultimately entered the party life being a theater major, and drinking became my escape and means to drown out my sorrow. I also began indulging in pornography secretly. This led to sexual immorality and womanizing. By the time I entered graduate school at Western Illinois University, I had hit rock bottom. I entertained suicidal thoughts. Then just in the nick of time, Jesus found me as I sat alone in the cornfields of Macomb, IL. I began bible study with the UBF chapter there. Like Levi, I heard Jesus’ call to follow him immediately. He made me useful to his work right away. By my third worship service, I was already presiding. Within months I was fishing on the campus and gave my first conference message at my first conference. Seventeen years ago if you were to tell me that I would be here in a life of faith sharing God’s word on a Sunday in Chicago, I would have said you’re crazy. But here I am. It is because Jesus came to heal me and called me as a servant to his kingdom. Praise Jesus, the healer of my life and soul.

Today we learned that Jesus came to this world as the healer. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (that is, each of us) to repentance. Whether we are leprous or paralyzed or selfish, whatever kind of sinner we are, Jesus is willing to help us. Let’s pray that we may come to Jesus by faith. Let’s spend time with him. Let’s experience his touch. May we come to our healer each and every day, so that we may all be healed gradually and live out our true purpose for God and His kingdom.