

SERMON - Jesus' healing presence begins God's destruction of Satan

³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were ill and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

(Mark 1:32-34)

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

(Isaiah 40:28-31)

Do you sometimes feel that life is so hectic that you 'Can't see the forest for all the trees'? You can't see the whole situation clearly because you're looking too closely at small details, or because you're too closely involved.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that **'Those who hope in the Lord will have their strength renewed... They will soar on eagles' wings.'** There is a similar Bible verse in the book of Exodus (19:4) which says, **'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'**

This is a reference to the way eagles teach their young to fly. They will catch them up when they are falling and carry them on their back. When we are falling in life, God catches us and soars with us to a safe place.

Imagine being caught up with God as on wings of an eagle. Suddenly you're above the forest of trees and you can see the whole picture, better than when you are down among the trees.

Today I want to take you above the immediate picture of our gospel story and let you catch a glimpse of the bigger picture of Mark's gospel account, not just the one story from today's reading.

Because Easter is early this year (the first Sunday in April) we'll miss out on some of the readings that are set down for the season of Epiphany from Mark's gospel; next Sunday is already Transfiguration Sunday (the Sunday assigned each year before Ash Wednesday) when we'll hear of Jesus temptation in the wilderness. So we miss on hearing 3 weeks of readings assigned to Sunday after Epiphany (*Epiph 6 Mark 1:40-45; Epiph 7 Mark 2:1-12; Epiph 8 Mark 2:13-22.*) Each of these readings continue on the revelation to the world that Jesus is God's healing agent in this broken and sick sin-filled world. And I want to briefly look at them with you, to help you see the full picture of Jesus transformational presence.

The gospel for Epiphany 6 (*Mark 1:40-45*) tells of a man with leprosy instantly being healed as Jesus touches him and says 'Be clean!'

The gospel for Epiphany 7 (*Mark 2:1-12*) tells of a paralytic man brought to Jesus by four friends, who was let down through a hole in the roof because the crowd was too big, and Jesus not only physically heals him but pronounces, '**Your sins are forgiven.**' (v5) Jesus' words creates quite a stir since Jews believe that only God can forgive sins.

Then the gospel for Epiphany 8 (*Mark 2:13-22*) tells how Jesus associates with tax collectors and people labelled as 'sinners' by the Jewish authorities; and then goes on to report how Jesus' disciples didn't practice fasting and other disciplines like good pious Jews. But Jesus responds in saying '**No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment... And no one pours new wine into old wineskins.**' (v 21) This saying implies that Jesus has come with a new gospel – a new way of connecting with God other than through the OT laws – connecting with God through Jesus himself.

These stories together with today's reading (*Mark 1:29-39*) about Jesus healing Peter's Mother-in-law from her bed ridden sickness, and then crowds of people coming to Jesus after sunset for him to heal the sick and exorcise the demons, shows what God has sent Jesus to do.

Jesus is in a battle with Satan, the prince of evil – the author of sin/ rebellion against God. Jesus comes into this world to free us from sins clutches and carry us back to the safety of our loving creator God.

Through Jesus God's is healing this broken and sin-filled world.

We've heard in the past few weeks how people have been amazed at Jesus' authority teaching and words. They have been divided in their

opinions when they've seen him cast out evil spirits. But regardless of their thoughts, they are seeing in Jesus the power of God at work.

Jesus is bringing healing. Not just physical healing to the body, but complete healing to the mind and spirit as well.

When Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law she is so well that she can get out of bed and start serving, as if there had been no sickness at all.

When Jesus heals the leper, he is told to go and show himself to the priest – implying that the priest will find no trace of sickness on this man; no scars or discolouration of skin to even hint that he had been an outcast leper moments before.

And when Jesus heals the paralytic man, not only is this man suddenly able to move his bodily limbs once more and start walking without months of physiotherapy, but Jesus tells him, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you!' **"Which is easier to say..., "Your sins are forgiven," or "Get up, take your mat and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... and turning to the man Jesus says, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.'** (Mark 2:9-11)

This is the biggest clue to the complete healing Jesus is bringing into this world. Healing of body, mind and soul unto eternity with our creator God. Satan who would have us eternally separated from God, by making us focus on ourselves, is being destroyed. Something that reaches its culmination in Jesus death and resurrection – but which has already begun in Jesus' healing and teaching ministry.

Jesus didn't come into this world to teach us how to be good and then have us work our own way to heaven by trying to be good just like him.

Jesus came into this world with a mission; to redeem/rescue us from Satan and carry us back to God, 'as on wings of an eagle.'

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.' (John 6:38ff)

Today's reading from Isaiah 40:21-31 reminds us that God is the creator of all things, but he is also the preserver of the world and saviour when the world needs healing and rescuing.

²¹ Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

²² He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth... He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in... ²⁶ Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

²⁷ Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God'? ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

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God our creator is also our rescuer. He pines when he sees this world in an embittered mess. He hates to see us in misery and despair. He has compassion when he sees us struggling in the sickness of this world.

That's why he sent Jesus.

Jesus is the answer to the troubles and problems of life. He comes to set us free from sin, Satan and death. He not only brings healing to the body, but he brings healing to the soul. He lifts us up as on wings of an eagle and carries us safely to our creator God where we can dwell in peace and security for all eternity.

This is our hope. This is our destiny. This is our joy.

Amen.