

Pastor Dwight Wagner
Garden Heights Baptist Church
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“The Heart of the Healer”

Mark 1:29-39

Introduction

If you could spend one day with anyone who would it be? Twenty-four hours? just shadowing that person all day long—watching what they do, hearing what they see, seeing how they interact with people. You could have a close up view of their life in the first person. Some of you might choose an historical figure, others someone in your profession, maybe it would be a sports hero or a political figure. Maybe you would like to just spend one day, if you could, with someone you loved and who is no longer near you or who has passed away. If you could spend one day with anyone who would you chose?

Wouldn't it be great to spend one day with Jesus Christ—one day during those three years of his public ministry here on earth. The next biggest decision would be—what day in his life would we want to spend with Jesus. Any day would be great, but I would suggest that the day we will consider today would have been a great day—actually two days, but still only about 24 hours worth of time.

This morning we will recap what has already happened on this day Jesus' life (what we saw last week) and then see what else happened. We could examine this day from many angles, but I've chose to look at it from what we learn about Jesus' heart so I've chosen the title, “The Heart of a Healer.” I pray that as we see Jesus' heart we will model His heart in our ministry to others.

We are reading from the gospel of Mark which is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:1). In this opening chapter we have been accumulating witnesses to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. John the Baptist has testified already, so has God the Father, God the Spirit, and even Jesus Christ Himself. A surprising witness is a demon who meets Jesus at a synagogue one Sabbath.

Now it is fine to make the claim, “Jesus is the Son of God!” and this is a pretty stunning array of witnesses so far. But is there evidence to prove it? Last week we saw two lines of evidence: the marvelous teaching of Jesus—one who taught with great authority—and his miraculous power—in casting out a demon with just a word. But was that Sabbath morning just a fluke? Well, let's continue to spend some more time with Jesus and see whether or not His words and actions back

up His claim to be the Son of God and as we do let's see His heart—the heart of a healer. (Prayer).

Let's set the scene for this day in the life of Jesus. Where are we in his life and ministry and location? When Jesus was about 30 years old, he went out in the wilderness to be baptized by John and immediately after this he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights—likely near the city of Jericho. He then spends about a year—a year of obscurity its' often called—down in southern Israel called Judea around Jerusalem. He travels north to Galilee, ministering along the way to a Samaritan woman. He'll spend the next several months, maybe up to a year in Galilee.

He begins by preaching in his hometown of Nazareth and gets thrown out of there after one message and so he heads to Capernaum, which will become his new “headquarters” there. Nazareth was about 1300 feet above sea level and Capernaum was about 700 feet below sea level so Luke tells us that Jesus “went down to Capernaum, a city in Galilee.” He calls four disciples—Peter, Andrew, James and John as he walks along the beautiful shore of the Sea of Galilee there.

Jesus and his disciples now move from the shore to the town called Capernaum, which means “village of Nahum” or “village of consolation.” It is one of the few towns named in Mark. Capernaum is in the heart of the most populated district in northern Palestine and was a great choice from which to launch his entire Galilean ministry (Galilee is in northern Israel). Here's why:

- Adjacent to the Via Maris, main trade route between Mediterranean Sea and the coastal plain on one side and Damascus to the north.
- Away from some of the bigger cities such as Beth Shan and Tiberias where Herod Antipas resided—a safe difference from political and religious interference.
- Had a great harbor in Jesus' day with a 2,500-foot promenade that was supported by an eight foot seawall. Piers extended from the promenade out one hundred feet.
- Hardworking citizens: fisherman, farmers, artisans, merchants and some government officials including tax collectors because there was a customs office there with all the traffic that went through the town
- Roman garrison there for public safety which also brought in Roman amenities which the Jews could enjoy. Remember Jesus will heal the daughter of a Roman centurion who built a synagogue there (one of several)
- Surrounded by fertile lands, plentiful fishing, and located on a major trade route brought economic prosperity which continued for several centuries.
- One sign: one of the most impressive synagogues excavated to date in the Holy Land—made from white imported limestone rather than from the local black basalt, such as discovered in Chorazin, also a port town. “ This

synagogue dates from the fourth century and is not the one visited by Jesus. A series of trenches cut beneath its floor in 1969 revealed a basalt stone pavement, however, which can be dated to the first century (it was strewn with first-century pottery and coins). This sub-pavement would appear to be the original floor of the synagogue visited by Jesus. The black basalt foundation of the synagogue Jesus knew is clearly visible at ground level beneath the fourth-century limestone synagogue.” (Pillar NT Commentary, p. 106). The synagogue Jesus spoke in on this day was likely destroyed in 66-70 AD.

- A proud city with unbelief. Since Jesus personally visited this city and spent much time here it would fall under greater judgment than would Sodom (Matthew 11:23-24)

He preaches in the synagogue in the morning. A synagogue was the Jewish equivalent to what we would call today a local church. There was at least one synagogue in every village in Galilee. The Talmud recorded that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone---likely an exaggeration but it shows you that they were quite numerous nonetheless.

One of the fascinating things I learned this week is that synagogues always faced Jerusalem, the speaker always spoke facing Jerusalem and when you exited you were facing Jerusalem. Galileans faced south! So Jesus whenever he spoke was facing the place where he was going to be crucified. Impossible for him not to be thinking of the cross!

Last week, this day in the life of Jesus began with Jesus attending a synagogue service. There would be prayers of thanksgiving, recitation of the Shema—Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one—a reading from a passage in the Law in Hebrew and a translation of it into Aramaic, a reading from the prophets (somewhere else in the OT in Hebrew and translated into Aramaic, a sermon or exposition on the reading of the day by a qualified Jewish man and then the benediction. In this case there was all of that and one other unusual occurrence—the casting out of a demon by Jesus that left the congregation amazed and astonished, but not yet converted by grace! What happens next?

“And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.” (Mark 1:29–34, ESV)

There you have a single day whose activities are spliced together with 5 occurrences of the Greek word “euthus” which means immediately, just then, as

soon as. Euthus occurs 11x in the the first chapter, and 40x in the whole book! What we see here is the authority of the Son of God in decisive action!!! One day shows the Son of God has authority over spiritual effects of the curse and physical effects of the curse over man's bodies. I mean what more do we need to show that Jesus is king. What's amazing is this is just one day. And Jesus does this day after day, week after week. We constantly see him healing disease and casting out demons to demonstrate his power over both realms. Countless healings and deliverances occur literally in one day! From noon to late evening!

A Loving Heart

So what do we learn about Jesus' heart even as he exercises great authority over the spiritual and physical realms? First, he has a loving heart! A loving heart!

It's now Sunday afternoon. Synagogue services ended around noon! Immediately Jesus and his new disciples leave the synagogue. I'm guessing that the four disciples basically floated home—they were bowled over by what they had seen already—they might have been dancing, at least in their hearts! Wow! A demon cast out and their leader impressed the crowd with his teaching.

Now they didn't have to go very far. They went to Peter's house--less than a block from the synagogue. Did you know that? Simon and Andrew were originally from Bethsaida (John 1:44) east of Capernaum, but within a day's walk. Perhaps they moved there for business purpose. Now he lives just yards from the synagogue according to very strong historical evidence. His house was

part of a large “insula” complex, in which doors and windows open to an interior court rather than outward to the street. The court, accessed by a gateway from the street, was the center of the lives of the dwellings around it, containing hearths, millstones for grain, handpresses, and stairways to the roofs of dwellings. The dwellings were constructed of heavy walls of black basalt over which a flat roof of wood and thatch was placed. Although the dwelling in question underwent various developments in succeeding centuries, archaeological investigations have discovered sacred and devotional graffiti in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Aramaic scratched on the plaster walls, indicating that it was venerated as a gathering place for Christians, and perhaps as a church, from the end of the first century or the beginning of the second. There is a strong probability that the site preserves Peter's house¹

Now there isn't much left in Capernaum today—mostly ruins but you have this synagogue on what is called Tell Hum and this house not very far from it. Back then they built things one right on top of another sort of like they did in Geneva Switzerland. If you go to the church where John Calvin preached—you go down in the basement of that church today and that is probably where he preached. They just built the church on top of Calvin's church. Same with the synagogue in

¹ Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament commentary (59). Grand Rapids, Mich; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

Capernaum. And if you go a one minute's walk from this synagogue you come to this pretty good size complex which suggests that Peter was somewhat affluent.

So right after church, Peter invites Jesus and the other disciples home for lunch. Customary then, just like now to eat your biggest meal right after morning worship. And for a preacher, I speak from my own experience, you sort of like to wind down a bit and relax because preaching takes it out of you.

But Jesus would get no rest when he got home. He meets another crisis. When they get to the house they discover that there is a sick cook instead of a sumptuous meal. Peter's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever! Yes, Peter was married and his mother-in-law lived with him. So did Andrew--maybe his wife and family, etc. A sick mother-in-law. Not a good way to start your Sunday afternoon after preaching and casting out a demon—hard work. But it doesn't phase Jesus at all.

I love this. First, the disciples invite Jesus home for dinner. It is always a great idea by the way—don't leave Jesus at church. Take him home with you and let him share your blessings and burdens. You know He is the unseen guest in your home every Sunday afternoon, don't you? And every day—at every meal, in every conversation, in every activity. It's a privilege to have people over to your house for fellowship but imagine this Saturday afternoon having Jesus over for dinner.

And I also love it that these follower of Jesus felt comfortable telling Jesus about this crisis—about their personal needs. Jesus loves to hear about the burdens we bear. Believe it, tell Jesus all of you cares and concerns. Peter and Andrew did. Notice “immediately they told Jesus about her.”

Now, this was a crisis. She lay with a fever. Luke, another gospel writer and a medical doctor, calls it a mega-fever—a great fever. She's in this grip of a fever. Which means what? Her body is fighting off an infection. Now today, we know something is wrong when we have a fever, but nine times out of ten, we know we are going to get better. But not back then. In fact, it has only been in the last 125 years or so in the civilized world that we have known how to treat a fever properly. Modern medicine is really only about that old. In fact before 1885 in America, medicine was pretty much a guessing game. You might think it is still today—and there is a lot medical research has to learn but until 1885, we had no idea how to treat viruses and fevers. We've all heard about people traveling around selling snake oil for this and that ailment. That was what it was like in the world—in civilized Europe and America—up until the late 1800's and really not till about 1920 or so—less than 100 years ago. A fascinating read on this is a book called *The Great Influenza*.

What does Jesus do? Verse 31, “And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.” That's a loving heart. There are 17 miracles recorded in Mark and this by

far is the shortest account of anyone of them, but It let's us into Jesus' heart—a loving heart. If you take the account of Matthew, Mark and Luke together you find out that Jesus stands close to her bed, takes her by the hand, rebukes the fever and gently raises her up before Peter and his wide-eyed friends.

Jesus shows personal compassion here to a widow. In Jewish culture, men were dominant. Women were secondary. And a woman without a husband was very vulnerable and often neglected. So Jesus, by this miracle, shows not only his sufficient power but his heart of compassion to those on the fringes of society. And we will see this repeatedly in Mark. Jesus is concerned about all people.

“And the fever left her” (v. 31b). She's completely healed. Normal temperature, normal energy level, no lingering effects. No liquid or soft liquid diet for a few days. No she is back to full strength instantly! Wow!

“And she began to serve them.” The word here is diakneo. Jesus touches her and heals her and she responds by serving everyone around here. You know there's a great principle there: Serving the Lord is one of the best ways to thank Him for all He has done for us. The Lord has healed some of you, hasn't he. The Lord has done some great things for you—given you a job, opened up some opportunity, spared your life, and all sorts of things. What's your response? Energetic service. You said, “If the Lord does . . . , I'm going to serve Him.” Are you doing that? Peter's mother in law did. Great principle!

Now think about this. There were no TV dinners back then, no microwaves, no freezers to store prepared food, no grocery stores. So she is preparing this meal from scratch for her family, four hungry fishermen and Jesus. So it was quite a meal. And it was served with love and excitement. I'm sure she said while she was cutting up the vegetables, “Peter, come feel my forehead! Cool! Can you believe it? Andrew, look at me? You saw me! He healed me!” What an afternoon!

A Compassionate Heart

So, we see Jesus had a loving heart. And secondly, closely related, he had a compassionate heart. We don't know what Jesus did from noon to six, but we know what happened at 6:01 that Saturday night. *“That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.”* (1:32-34)

The phrase “evening at sundown” tells us that at 6PM people start bringing their sick loved ones and carrying their demon-possessed friends to Jesus. The law, as interpreted by the Jewish scribes, stated that you couldn't carry anything or walk very far on the Sabbath. But the Sabbath ended when you could see three stars

shining in the sky after sunset. So one, two, ready set, and the third star appears, and people I think are running to Peter's house as fast as they can! "They brought all who were sick and oppressed by demons to Jesus!" They just kept coming and coming! A huge amount of people. Case after case, a surging mass of crippled, diseased, blind, maimed people people pressing at the door. Can you imagine the scene—all sorts of sick people. Can you imagine the odor? And then you had all sorts of people oppressed by demons like the man in synagogue. The diseased and the demonic come! By the way this shows a distinction between the two. Satan can certainly afflict men's body (he caused Job's suffering) but equally true is that not all sickness is caused by demons.

And then Mark says, "The whole city was gathered at the door!" Mark writes through Peter's eyes—which just keep getting bigger and bigger throughout the day. Authoritative teaching, exorcism, heals mother-in-law, word spreads, and now the whole diseased and demon-oppressed population is outside his door. These people are desperate. And Jesus heals the sick and casts out demons. Peter is beaming with pride and joy! His master! He made the right decision to follow this guy!

Oh, see the compassion of Jesus as he looks upon the tired, weary souls of the sick and the possessed. Do we have that same compassion?

And if you read Luke's account, it isn't like Jesus says, "OK, all you who can't walk over here, blind over here, and those with fevers this quadrant And then he heals en masse. No, Jesus "laid his hands on every one of them and healed them." Personal, individual, one by one, giving personal attention, lovingly, tenderly, compassionately healing them! Massive, but personal healing! He healed everyone of them. The "many" of verse 34 is the same group as the "all" of verse 32.

And Jesus did this, even though nearly everyone who came wasn't coming because they thought Jesus was God, but because they heard he was a miracle worker and they wanted their health restored. And really, don't be too hard on them. Offer one hundred people the choice between having their health restored and enjoying life for the next 20 years relatively disease-free or receiving a guaranteed spiritual relationship of peace with God, what are people going to opt for? They will take physical healing, right?

This group on this day foreshadowed the thousands later that after being fed on one day sought after Jesus the next. And why? Because they liked having free food and not having to prepare it at all! They, like millions still today, only seek a magical Jesus!

So Jesus has compassion on the diseased! Amazing, mass healing yet personalized healing! But then he casts out many demons—not with long incantations and exorcism and chanting and wailing or after much prayer or after a large donation was received! No, instantly here! And again the language is so precise. He was casting them out! Over and over again! Demons are running pell-mell. The bed-ridden are tossing their mats into the air. The lame are leaving their crutches by the road. The comatose are lucid and conversing. And the onlookers are in a frenzy with joy. The sounds of happiness and laughter are echoing across the waves on the Sea of Galilee.

And as we read last week in verse 25 where Jesus commands the demon to “Be silent!” so here in verse 34, “He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew Him.” Luke's account describes it like this: “*And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.*” (Luke 4:41, ESV). Again as I said last week, it's so fascinating that the demons know who Jesus is while all the humans didn't.

Why did the demons acknowledge Christ so loudly? We don't know. Perhaps they had malicious motives thinking they would get Jesus in trouble prematurely. It certainly wasn't because they were confessing Him with their mouth in obedience. Oh, they believe Him. They are orthodox. But they are utterly opposed to Him.

Why does Jesus command them to silence? Again we aren't told for sure. Surely Christ didn't need or seek the endorsement of demons. But in the book of Mark Jesus repeatedly calls people to silence. He tells a cleansed leper, the family of girl he raises from the dead, the deaf-mute and the blind man to all keep silent about Jesus (1:44; 5:43; 7:26; 8:26). He tells the disciples twice to not tell others who He is (8:30; 9:9). And on a couple of occasions he actually withdraws from the crowds so as to escape attention (7:24; 9:30).

Why? It might be as simple and as practical that Jesus knew such rumblings that He was Messiah would provoke Roman intervention. Rome was always concerned about the political and military intentions of those with large followings.

It might be related to Jesus coming in humility as a Servant His first coming was characterized by humiliation. Exaltation comes only after humiliation. He comes as servant. A bruised reed he will not break. He will demonstrate for three years by His words and deeds that He is Messiah, not by the testimonies of others.

The most likely explanation of this “silence” strategy is that any announcement of who Jesus really is is premature until after the cross. Only in light of the cross can Jesus be rightly known and His message received. Only then can Jesus' full mission be understood.

But back to the main point—Jesus demonstrates here a compassionate heart. Just like in Matthew 9 when he looks over the crowds and he is moved with . . . compassion! He cared for the down and out, the neglected, the castaways, the oppressed. Do you do that? How much are you like Jesus? How much do you show godly, Christlike compassion to the needy? Even when they seek help with the wrong motives. To whom can you show compassion this week?

A Tireless Heart

Finally, Jesus demonstrates a tireless heart. The clear implication of verse 32-34 was that this healing and exorcism ministry went on late into the evening. The whole town is at Peter's door. Jesus deals with each case individually. And then the very next morning, he rises early to pray (v. 35). Just preaching the Word and ministering to normal people is exhausting. I know I am exhausted at the end of the Lord's Day. I just want to sit and veg some. And I have never done anything compared to what Jesus did that day.

Remember He's human. Exhausted, yet ministering grace. Ministry is tiring, even for Jesus as a man. His outward man was tiring day by day but next week we will see that he was renewed in his inner man every day. For 1:35 says, *“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”* (Mark 1:35, ESV).

How is God calling you to show compassion this week within the body of Christ? How is God calling you to love within this congregation and outside of it? What needs do you see in the lives of people? Will you, by God's grace, be willing to be an instrument in the hand of the Redeemer, to bring love, to that person's life? Even if you know they might just want you for what you can give them? Are you weary in doing well? Jesus loves to help the drained and weary soul. In due season you will reap! Don't faint in the day of adversity!

Ministry in the Word is so critical. In fact, it is primary. But so is compassion ministry. Jesus healing authenticated his message. We don't need that aspect today because we have the written Word of God. You can check out what you hear by comparing it to the Word. But compassion to others in need—having the heart of Christ, the great Healer—demonstrating a heart of love, compassion, and tireless care in certain seasons often gives us a platform for speaking the gospel.

Who do you think of when you think of someone loving, compassionate, and tireless? Whose heart reveals that to you? In many cases, we think maybe of our mothers—who devotedly raised us. But you know what—here's a challenge to men—to fathers today—it is manly, it is Christlike to be loving, compassionate and tireless. Being a dad is a calling that requires all of that and more. Being loving and compassionate with our kids is being like Jesus. We tend to be harsh,

aloof, and have a hardened edge. Our kids don't need to hear “when I was your age and got hurt, I never got any time off from chores! You've got the flu and can hardly get out of bed. So what? Mow the lawn anyway!” They need compassion, love, and our tireless counsel and attention. Even when we come home from work and want to drop in the chair and watch the ballgame.

And dads, do your kids see you demonstrating compassion and love to those who are in pain, to those who are oppressed or who are needy? Do they see Christlike sensitivity—how about to those in need in the church or even those who tend to take advantage of us? Do your children see love and compassion in your life? Do they see you giving yourself in ministering to others even when you are tired? Let's be men of compassion, love, and untiring ministry for God.

And may all of us see the heart of Jesus the healer and model His heart this week in the life of the church and in our community.

Next week I want us to explore the issue of healing a bit more. I want to answer the following questions:

- Is what we've seen today God's standard operating procedure?
- Does the gift of healing exist today?
- How did Jesus heal?
- Which of these two gifts—healing or exorcism--would you rather have?

And then we will see more aspects of Christ's heart as a healer.

On healing and exorcism

Let's spend the remainder of time just

Is what we see in this text God's standard operating procedure?

Does the gift of healing exist today?

How did Jesus heal?

Which of these two gifts would you rather have?

A Praying Heart

A Humble Heart

A Word-proclaiming Heart