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“The Heart of Jesus” Mark 1:35-39

Introduction

Charles Gabriel, a well-known hymn composer, penned this song,

More like the Master I would ever be,
More of His meekness, more humility;
More zeal to labor, more courage to be true,
More consecration for work He bids me do.

More like the Master is my daily prayer;
More strength to carry crosses I must bear;
More earnest effort to bring His kingdom in;
More of His Spirit, the wanderer to win.

More like the Master I would live and grow;
More of His love to others I would show;
More self denial, like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be.

As we turn once again to Mark's gospel, chapter 1, this should be our earnest desire: to be more like Jesus, to be devoted followers of Jesus Christ—followers who aren't able to do replicate everything Jesus did, but followers who see and model His heart—a heart for God, a heart for others, a heart for our families, our church, and the lost.

Today, I want to pick up once again on this theme of seeing and modeling the heart of Jesus. We will do this by addressing one contemporary issue this text raises as we review Jesus' healing ministry and then we will continue to explore Jesus' heart as we look at the next day (Sunday) Jesus spent in Capernaum.

Last week we saw this about Jesus: he displayed a loving, compassionate, and a tireless heart for others. Today, we want to consider whether or not and why or why not there is such thing as a healing ministry today and then explore more of the heart of Jesus.

On healing (and exorcism)

“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 1:32–34)

This is how Jesus ended his Saturday after a day of teaching with authority, casting out a demon in the synagogue and healing Peter's mother-in-law of a great fever. Some will look at this text and what follows and Mark and build an entire theology (a false theology) on what is called “faith healing.” We've been thinking biblically about this on Wednesday nights together but let's just probe a bit deeper at this point in Scripture and answer four simple questions about healing primarily and then exorcism of demons.

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

First question is: “Is what we see in this text God's standard operating procedure—his normal way—of dealing with disease. Many will claim that it is—that God has always had a massive healing ministry—but we aren't seeing it today because we lack of faith. Does that stand up to biblical scrutiny? No! Not when you consider these facts:

- The first healing recorded in Scripture is found in Genesis 20 in the time of Abraham (which means that we have no recorded miraculous healing for the first roughly 2000 years of biblical history). Amazing because you have a lot of miracles, a lot of great things happening, but no healings.
- For the next 1250 years (roughly from Abraham to Isaiah) the Bible records about 20-25 episodes of divine healing (all the way from one person to many at a time). So you have millions of people alive and only 25 occurrences in more than a millenium of human history.
- Then from about 700 BC to the time of Jesus Christ, you have no recorded healings in Scripture.
- The only time you have massive healing anywhere in Scripture for an extended period is during Jesus' ministry and for some time in the life of the early church. Why then? Why primarily then? To authenticate the teaching, the message of Christ and the apostles. After the canon of Scripture is complete by 100 AD, healing has ceased in the record.
- And by the way, you have several instances in the later apostolic period of people not being healed: Paul, Epaphroditus, Timothy, Trophimus.
- No mention of healing in the books to Timothy and Titus and they were second generation apostolic pastors.
- There is no promise in the NT of future waves of healing.

So, no, there has never been this non-stop massive healing that many of the faith healers claim has existed. The Bible does not support it.

Does the gift of healing exist today?

But you ask, is there such a thing as the gift of healing today, such as was mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14? The answer is “no.” God still heals today but there are no such people today who have the gift of faith healing—which is a troublesome term in and of itself alone because it implies that it is one's faith

that heals, not God. Let me say this clearly: there are no people alive today who can heal instantly like Jesus healed! What are these people then who claim to heal? The ones on TV, who have the big crusades? They are charlatans, fakes, and some of the sorriest people on the face of the earth. They are men and women who prey on the suffering, the disabled, the weak and it is pathetic. They are the lowest of low. They need the gospel—the true gospel—for they are sinners like you and me but they are willfully scamming millions of people. I mean, how low you can go—not much lower than writing well-crafted letters or putting on an impressive, manipulative show telling people that if they send you money, they will be healed! And what happens? Nothing changes for them—they are still sick, in wheelchairs, and in pain but you are living in luxury and you go on doing this.

I mean this should make us weep, this should make us righteously indignant to see these faith healers prey on desperate people. We should be appalled when we hear them say, “Send your check of \$100 and I will send you this healing hanky. You pray over it and you will be completely healed—if you have faith! Of course, when they aren't healed, the problem isn't the hanky or the healer, it is the person who lacks faith. And maybe one of the ways they lack faith is that they didn't send enough money! Friends, let's just call it what it is! It is heresy, it is blasphemy to say that God wants every person to be healthy and wealthy. Pardon the pun but the ones who offering healing make truth loving Christians sick, not healthy!

Now, don't get me wrong, I would love to have this gift of healing! I mean, wouldn't you? Wouldn't it be great to have a genuine gift of healing that these deceivers claim to have. I would operate differently than they would though if I had it. I would go down to the hospitals and start healing people. Now the doctors, insurance companies, and hospital staff may not be too happy. They might be out of a job pretty soon if this gift existed but that's what I would do. Oh, and by the way, the faith healers never do this. Why not, I wonder. Why doesn't Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland and Creflo Dollar do this?

Why don't they go to NICU and heal babies who are struggling for their lives? Or the the cancer units where people are receiving palliative care? Why don't they go to people who are comatose, the trauma unit. Why don't they head to the nursing homes and heal people who are wheelchair bound, or instantly heal people who are waiting for kidney transplants and have to be on dialysis until then.

I mean if the gift of healing existed today, if these faith healers were all they were cracked up to be, why don't they go to places like Haiti, countries in Africa where AIDS is ravaging the population, or to third world countries like Bangladesh? All we would have to do is get 20 or so of these charlatans to take a jet tour of the world and you would think they could rid the world virtually of illness if they really had the gifts they claim.

But you know what—they will never go to war-torn regions, hospital, nursing homes, and I have never seen a faith healer in funeral home bringing people back to life. That would be something, wouldn't it? Why do they always operate in their rented auditoriums, their plush facilities, or from behind a TV set? Because they are fakes, unlike Jesus who healed people out in the open with skeptics surrounding him who never once questioned whether someone was genuinely healed or not—the evidence was irrefutable.

And even if there was this gift of healing as they claim today, I'm sure God would not give it to people with really bad theology! I'm positive (I'm not making a positive faith confession here) that if faith healing existed today, God wouldn't give the gift to Benny Hinn who believes that each member of the trinity is actually three persons himself so what you end up with is 9 members of the Godhead. God doesn't give such miraculous sign gifts who are all messed up about who God is, who Jesus is, and who man is! It's that simple.

Christ is the one who would give such power and he gave it to the twelve and to the seventy and Paul and that's it. He gave it to people with good theology—and he gave them this gift to authenticate, to affirm, that the message they were preaching was genuine! You and I don't need such affirmation today. You can check out what I say by comparing it with Scripture! Right? Just check out what anyone says by the Scriptures. That is the plumb line for truth.

How did Jesus heal?

Now, verse 34 says “he healed many who were sick with various diseases.” Now we remember this is only one day in Jesus' ministry. There are over 90 references to Jesus' healing on earth! As John MacArthur has said, “During our Lord's ministry, there was an unparalleled healing explosion that virtually banished disease from Israel. This one little spot on the earth, disease was banished. Never was there in history such a healing barrage.”

But think about how Jesus healed!

- He healed with a word: no long incantation or drawn out process! He spoke or touched and boom! Healing
- He healed instantly: whether it was a woman who had a bleeding issue, lepers, deaf, lame. How different than testimonials from encounters with faith healers, “I have been healed by _____ and I have been getting better ever since.” What?
- He healed completely: The blind man didn't wear glasses! The lame man didn't have to use a walking cane. Completely!
- He healed indiscriminately. Right here it says, he healed many (v. 34)--all who were sick! Notice you didn't have to go through a vetting process to be healed. Jesus didn't instruct his disciples to put all those who were without

a limb, eyes, paralyzed, or stage 4 cancer patients in the back of the line like they often do at these healing services.

- He healed organic illness—not just lower back pain, a headache or some other non-verifiable malady like contemporary healers make their thousands off.
- He healed supernaturally. He actually restored people to life—like the widow's son and Lazarus. I've never seen a faith healer at a cemetery plying their gifts, have you?
- He healed publicly—not in some controlled setting
- He didn't require faith! I mean, Lazarus wasn't raised from the dead because he had faith! Pretty hard to exercise faith if you are dead. And almost all the people whom Jesus healed were unbelievers—at least before he healed them. Show me where in the Bible—with proper interpretation-- it says, “If you have faith, God will heal you!” And faith isn't faith in your faith! Biblical faith is always in God!
- He didn't require money! Never!

Which of these two gifts would you rather have?

Finally, notice in verse 34, Jesus not only “healed many who were sick with various diseases” but it says he “cast out many demons.” Now, if I could do what Jesus did or just half of what Jesus did, I would say, “Lord, I sure would love that healing gift, but if you can only give me one, give me that gift!” If I had a choice I would take the gift to cast out demons. You might think I'm a bit weird with all the disease and suffering in the world that exists. No, I am not a Christian scientist thinking all of that exists only in one's mind. So why would I want this gift? Because in 1 Timothy 4:1 it says, “*Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.*” And such teaching damns the soul!

Do you realize that behind the cults are demons. Behind all the pagan religions in this world are demons. That behind corrupted, heretical Christianity such as Roman Catholicism that claims that if you go this holy site or touch the bones of this apostle or pay to see the breast milk of Mary or the hair of the apostle Peter or whatever are demons. They are all under the influence of Satanic instigation. So what would I do with this gift of casting out demons? Go and cast out the demons who are directing every false religion and false teacher. Expose error and stop it from spreading!

I wouldn't fool around like many again who claim to have this gift of casting out demons (which again is not a gift—only Jesus and the apostles did this) such as they imagine—the demon of post-nasal drip, the demon of anxiety, the demon of poverty, the demon of unrealized potential or whatever—I don't believe there is a demon behind every bush. No, I would go straight to Watchtower headquarters, to

the Mormon Tabernacle, to the Trinity Broadcasting Network production studios, to the Vatican or the Eternal Word network and cast false teaching out.

Now, of course, I can't do that! And neither can you! So you know what, we do what God calls us to do—keep proclaiming the truth! The truth! That is what God is calling us to do! He calls us to speak the truth in love, to love the truth, to disseminate truth! It is this truth that sets us free.

And notice, here is one similarity between truth lovers today and Jesus. We don't need the endorsement, the approval, the affirmation of false teachers to carry on our ministry or to expand our ministry! Jesus didn't allow the demons to speak even though they were actually speaking truth about him. Nor do we.

There's a growing movement today among evangelicals to gain wider approval and standing in the world. So some evangelicals will sign statements about the gospel with those who deny the gospel—they preach a different gospel which is not the gospel that saves. And some evangelicals are either seeking approval from non-evangelicals or are lending it to them. Wrong-headed!

Thank God there are always some who will not budge. I read recently about John MacArthur who a few years ago received a call from some Mormon leaders who wanted to meet with him. He agreed to do so and as they began he explained to him how much they were impacted by his book *The Gospel According to Jesus*. He was stunned to find out that Brigham University the professors used this as a textbook. “Why are you here to meet with me?”

John said, “What are you talking about? How can it be a text book?”

“Well, we like the fact that you love Christ and you honor Christ.” And they said, “Would you come to BYU and would you speak to the students and to the faculty?”

And I said no. I don't...I don't need affirmation from a demonic religion that purports to represent Christ. And praise God, neither did Jesus, neither do we.

Now, let's not forget these truths as we continue through our study of Mark, because we are going to see these themes of healing, demon possession, and exorcism repeatedly as we journey with Jesus through this gospel. Just tuck them away, remember them and they will do us well as we continue on.

A Praying Heart

And continue on we must, so let's look at four more verses that finish up this particular Sunday morning in Jesus' life. We are looking at Jesus' heart and we have seen that Jesus has a loving heart, a compassionate heart, and a tireless

heart. But I want to finish up this pericope, this day in the life of Jesus by considering three more characteristics of his heart in ministry.

Next, we see Jesus had a praying heart. *“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). There's a wealth of truth in this verse but let me just point out some highlights quickly

When does he pray—rising very early in the morning while it was still dark Notice first when Jesus prays—his time for prayer. “And rising very early in the morning.” Mark is keen on giving verbal clues as time. And here he is telling us that sometime between 3 AM and 6 AM Jesus gets up to prayer—and this after an exhausting day and late night, Jesus gets up to prayer. Amazing. And in just a little while everyone is going to be up looking for Jesus! So prayer wasn't exercised in leisure but in the midst of a demanding, rigorous, stressful ministry life. This suggests an early morning meeting with God.

Throughout human history, many have done their great tasks in the early morning. Abraham sacrificed early in the morning, Moses went up to receive the Law early in the morning, Joshua did the same when he attacked Jericho, Job rose early to sacrifice. Not all great men have risen early. Winston Churchill worked late into the night and often didn't get out of bed until late morning. But early morning is a time we can pray if we have an otherwise busy schedule.

A second interesting point this verse raises is where Jesus prayed--“he departed [presumably from Peter's house] and went out into a desolate place [eremos—the same word for wilderness that Mark has used to describe where John was ministering and where Jesus was tempted for forty days.] Although a desolate place normally means “a desert” or something like that, here it means “a secluded, quiet place; a remote location” away from the clamor where he can lift his soul to heaven.

What does he pray about? The text doesn't tell us really, It simply states and there he prayed [literally was praying]--suggested that Jesus enjoyed a prolonged period of communing with His Father! Proseuchomai—simplest, most general word for prayer in the Scripture. This word expresses the conscious outgoing of the soul to God, desiring Him. So Jesus after a busy day of ministry senses the need to be spiritually refreshed and maintain fellowship with His Father! Beautiful and challenging, isn't it. We know that the subject of his prayers was not necessarily as broad as ours in the sense that Jesus never had to pray about several categories that we must. He never had a sin to confess, a failure to lament, a mistake to mourn, mismanaged time to regret, or needed to repent of a duty he failed to accomplish nor of a sin he ever committed unintentionally.

Based on his other recorded prayers, he likely prayed for Himself, his disciples, and for sinners in need of repentant faith. Perhaps, here is prayer retreat might have focused on the fact that his rise in sudden popularity might ensnare him and induce him to accept the way of ease rather than that of the cross!

Beyond that we don't what Jesus prayed about. It is interesting that Mark records Jesus actually praying three times in his gospel. Here, after feeding the five thousand (6:46) and in Gethsemane (14:32-39)--all times of crisis and impending opposition to his stated ministry goals or duties. These were times of temptation to take the easy way out rather than persevering to the cross.

How important was prayer to Jesus? Although Mark records only three prayer events in Jesus life. We see, as we consult the other gospels, that he lived a life of both concentrated and spontaneous seasons of prayer. Here are some of the examples of, no doubt, a much more extensive life of prayer and thanksgiving:

He himself prayed when he was baptized (Luke 3:21); just before choosing the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12); in connection with, and after, the miraculous feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:41, 46; cf. Matt. 14:19, 23); when he was about to ask his disciples an important question (Luke 9:18); on the mountain where he was transfigured (Luke 9:28); just before extending the tender invitation, "Come to me all who are weary ..." (Matt. 11:25-30; Luke 10:21); just before he taught the disciples the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1); at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:41, 42); for Peter, before the denial (Luke 22:32); during the night of the institution of the Lord's Supper (John 17; cf. 14:16); in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32, 35, 36, 39; cf. Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; Luke 22:42); on the cross (Luke 23:34; Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46; Luke 23:46); and after his resurrection (Luke 24:30).

Why does he pray? Jesus prayed because he lived a life totally dependent on the Father and the Son. So must we. Jesus was both human and divine. He was sleeping (humanity) but He had been performed miraculous healings and exorcisms (divinity). Now he prays, expressing the critical need for communion and dependence on the Father and Spirit.

In his incarnation, Jesus places himself under the Father's will and under the Spirit's authority. He laid us the divine prerogatives as Son but maintained His deity. He set aside the independent use of His attributes, submitting Himself to the Father. So he says, "I only do what the Father tells me to do, what the Father shows me. I only do what I know the Father wants me to do. I don't speak on my accord. But I speak the words of the Father! Not my will but yours be done!" Jesus prays to express humble and utter dependence upon and to maintain critical communion with God the Father and God the Spirit.

Does he want us to pray? Now, just by His example, we ought to be motivated to spend concentrated, quality time with our Father in prayer. No doubt after the resurrection such scenes were powerful impressions upon the disciples who often

saw him the Savior do this! But it is equally compelling and convicting that Jesus not only left an example to follow but issued commands to be obeyed regarding prayer.

He urges us to pray: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”* (Matthew 7:7–11)

He shows us how to pray. *“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”* (Matthew 6:6–8)

He gives us a model prayer. *“Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* (Matthew 6:9–15)

And he let us listen to Him pray (John 17).

Principles for powerful praying

Devoted followers of Jesus Christ will devote themselves to times of concentrated prayer like Jesus. Here are some helpful principles if we want to become more like the Master

- We will do well to pray daily and privately with God. Few of us will spend many hours in prayer at one time, but all must spend some time in prayer.
- Choose a quiet, secluded place if at all possible. Be resourceful.
- If your life is busy, morning may be the best time for extended prayer
- Be disciplined when you pray. Don't fritter away the time. You can waste time praying. Jesus didn't.
- The busier you are, the more devoted you need to be to prayer. Study Christ's prayer life and you will discover that he prayed more frequently than we do, for longer periods than we do, with greater intensity and fixity of concentration than we do.
- Begin small but start practicing concentrated prayer times.
- Develop a “not-to-do” list and you might find more time for prayer.

Biggest excuse is time: Here are two timely exhortations. One that has haunted me for nearly 20 years now and one I read this week. They both teach that busyness is no excuse for prayerlessness.

“Brethren, we have plenty of time if we husbanded and hoarded it up aright. We can not look seriously in one another’s faces and say it is lack of time. It is lack of intention. It is lack of determination. It is lack of conscience. It is lack of heart. It is lack of everything and anything but time.”--Alexander Whyte.

“Martyn Lloyd-Jones once spoke with a group of medical students who complained that in the midst of their training and the ferocious work hours they really didn’t even have time to read the Bible and have their devotions and so on. He bristled and said, “I am a doctor. I have been where you are. You have time for what you want to do.” After a long pause he said, “I make only one exception: the mother of preschool-aged children does not have time and emotional resources.”--D. A. Carson (although Susanna Wesley somehow managed).

God help us seriously consider how to develop a praying heart like Jesus.

A Humble Heart

Next, notice Jesus' humble heart. Verse 37: “And Simon and those who were with him [presumably the other disciples but who weren't acting like disciples quite yet—here we see the first time Peter exercises real leadership among the twelve] searched [were searching, hunting for, katadiokein] for him.

“They found him and said to him [I imagine they are pretty excited], “Everyone is looking for you!” The verb *zeitēō* translated “looking for” is usually used by Mark in a negative sense such as to obstruct, interfere, control, etc. But the disciples are using it in the sense of “You are losing precious time here, Jesus. Hey, everyone is already up and they are bringing in more people for you to heal, they are expecting more miracles. Let's build on yesterday! Don't waste your time out here praying! We have a busy day ahead! A day of great opportunity! *Carpe diem!* Seize the day! Build your base!”

How does Jesus respond? (v. 38). “And he said to them, let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also.” What? You aren't going to start a megachurch here? You aren't going to establish a national movement from here?”

I love it, don't you? Jesus isn't going to let other such as the crowd or even his own disciples shape his agenda. He rebukes his disciples mildly here and demonstrates great humility as he declines the fame in favor of going to other towns to preach there also. He is not building his kingdom! He has come to seek and save the lost!

Devoted followers of Jesus Christ will develop humble hearts—seeking first the kingdom of God, recognizing Jesus must increase and we must decrease.

A Word-proclaiming Heart

A loving, compassionate, tireless, praying, humble, and finally Word-proclaiming heart! (vv. 38-39). Let us go. . . that I may preach there also for that is why I came out [from heaven likely, though maybe Capernaum as well]. And he went

throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. Matthew also records that Jesus was *“healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.”* (Matthew 4:23–24)

Notice, his primary mission: to preach. *Keryssein*. It means to proclaim with authority, to herald or proclaim the Word. Miracles produced amazement, but not always belief. Jesus knew that. He recognized the shallowness of the crowds, while all the disciples saw was the swelling of the crowds. Jesus said, “Fellows, it's more important that I preach the gospel than that I heal everyone. I've come to call sinners to repentance.” (Mark 2:17).

Christ came to proclaim that God is the loving ruler and creator of this world. That man has chosen to rebel against his Maker. God must punish this rebellion with death, judgment, and eternal separation from the loving presence of God. He won't let this rebellion continue. But God has devised a way for us rebels to be reconciled—through Jesus Christ. Because God loved the world, He sent His Son, Jesus who is fully God. Jesus came into this world as a man and took on a human nature. He lived a perfectly righteous and sinless life. He then willingly died on behalf of sinners on the cross and satisfied the righteous, just wrath of God against sinners. He rose from the dead and ascended back to heaven but will one day return. God calls on men everywhere to repent from their rebellion and believe in the person and the provision of Jesus Christ so as to be right with God!

This preaching tour lasted for some time, although we don't know how long. Weeks maybe months.

Do you have a word-proclaiming heart? You say, I can't preach. Yes, but you can proclaim the gospel. You can't take this tract “Two Ways to Live” and ask someone to read it and then talk with you about it.

I know one thing, I can't cast out demons, but I can tell other people about Christ. I can't heal every affliction, but I can love others. I can't bring relief to epileptics, but I can show compassion. I can't draw large crowds like Jesus, but that's OK because I know my heart that is prone to pride. I want a humble heart (and that is a challenge no matter how well-known or little-known you are). I'll never teach as Jesus did—with inherent authority—no man speaks as He did, but I can tirelessly *“proclaim [Him], warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. . .toiling, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”* (Colossians 1:28–29)

Lord, give us such hearts! Christian, develop the heart of Jesus in these ways.