



Suffering and the Hope of Healing_(Part 1)

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While my mother was battling cancer, I took a long and hard look at the problem of suffering. As I fell into step with my mother as best I could during her journey with the vicious disease, many thoughts and discussions ensued regarding the plague of sin upon humankind, the exemption of no one, and the inevitability of death.

The Scripture always provides safe places of comfort and hope. I found one such place in the life of Jesus. Mark writes about the incident in his opening chapters. As any writer knows, the first line, paragraph, and chapter is critical to capturing an audience's attention. And here in the first chapter, Mark begins to paint a portrait of the Messiah that is both startling and sagacious.

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law in Capernaum. Shortly afterward, many in the town brought the sick and demon-possessed to be healed by Jesus. The text notes that they came "after sunset." Jesus toils

into the night, serving, healing, and transforming the bodies of disease-ridden victims. Then "while it was still dark" (apparently he worked all night), Jesus goes to a quiet place to be with his Father. While down in the town, the disciples of Jesus were surrounded by more pleading people to heal their sick and cure their diseases. The disciples scurry to find Jesus in the solitary place and, upon finding him, exclaim, "Everyone is looking for you!"

The world had found a healer, a physician, to steal away their medical problems! They rushed to the one who could cure their pain. But Jesus gives a halting reply, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

I can imagine the countenances of these new disciples of Jesus. Their faces fallen. Their eyes perplexed. Their arms frozen in place from the hustle. Perhaps their minds suddenly seize upon that word "preach." "How is THAT going to cure anyone?" they think. "People do not get cured from cancer or leprosy or hepatitis by preaching!"

But Jesus, the wisest man who ever lived, understood something about reality that the disciples, and even

we, forgot. All healed people will become sick again. The blind will become blind again—if not in life, at least in death. And death, ultimately, will be a final victor.

That is, death will be victor if Jesus does not preach. But Jesus knew that there was something that needed healing far more than the body. Healing was needed for the soul—the desperate soul, full of the pockmarks of sin, destitute with mediocre relationships, fearful of being exposed, resentful of others, dishonest with its own condition, and selfish to build its kingdom in the desolate dungeon of its own ego. If the souls of men and women did not find the good news Jesus was bringing into the world, then even the many healings would be of ridiculously small account.

But Jesus stood his ground with the disciples and insisted that, instead of physical healing, there must be a spiritual healing of the souls of men and women across the countryside of Israel. "THAT is why I have come," he said. And he went out proclaiming the news that, finally, the conclusive way to friendship with Jehovah had been opened.

And this was the truth my mother held all the way to the grave, now to know Jesus Christ in that far more exceeding weight of Glory awaiting a new body that will never again need healing.

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