

Bring Your Ills to Jesus

- ✠ God of mercy (vv.29-34)
- ✠ Man of prayer (vv.35-37)
- ✠ Called to preach (vv.38-39)

In the Name of Jesus, our shining Epiphany Savior and Redeemer, dearly beloved of God:

Does God still do miracles? Ask the couple who has been trying to conceive a child for many years and at great expense. You quickly learn a lesson that every child is a gift of God. And that makes all of you a miracle of the Creator. One man named Nick Vujicic was born without arms or legs. Yet he has been giving speeches since he was a teenager about God's goodness to him. Over five million people have attended his talks. He's happier now than ever since his "miracle," a beautiful young woman named Kanae, married him. You might look at pictures of their son at twenty months and wonder, "How could they have a child?" Nick just laughs and says, "Everything works fine in that department."¹

So how can you love yourself and celebrate life as this best-known author and adventure-sport enthusiast inspires? Honestly, some days I'm so sick of myself after the first hour because of the negative thoughts that keep pounding me down. How do you deal with real life? It's not just Nick Vujicic and millions of Christians who will tell you this. They learned it as we all do ultimately from God's Word: **Bring Your Ills to Jesus**. "Evangelical Christian," in the best sense you know Jesus as the...

✠ God of mercy (vv.29-34)

God must be extremely eager for everyone to know this. He inspired holy writers on three continents, in three languages, from many cultures, for about 2000 years to write sixty-six books about the **God of mercy**. Have you read all sixty-six? Some are really short, but none are as long as a novel. And all of them are treasured up in your Bible, you know, that Book of Books that gathers dust on so many shelves. And we wonder why people are so disheartened, so depressed, so unhealthy. It's not God's fault.

Personally, I love how God inspired not one, not two, not even three, but four witnesses to communicate the ultimate fulfillment of all God's loving kindness and tender mercy in the Person of His one and only begotten Son. John wrote much later and was God-inspired to add many of Jesus' sermons. Have you read the Gospel in John's account? Great place to start your Bible reading. The other three are called the *Synoptics* because they report from a very similar point of view. This is Mark 1, whereas Luke is up to Chapter 4 and Matthew is already in Chapter 8. It seems obvious that the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to reach out to fellow Jews who knew the Old Testament Scriptures of the Bible. Mark wrote mostly to Gentile Romans. And good Doctor Luke was showing the **God of mercy** to Gentile Greeks.

Last week we attended church with Jesus in the Capernaum synagogue. Jesus taught with authority and drove out a demon by commanding, "***Be quiet! Come out of him!***"² Now the Amazing Teacher and Awesome Commander leaves the synagogue and walks through narrow city streets past tiny homes about 100 yards to the nice house of Simon Peter. His mother-in-law is sick in bed with a high fever. "***Without delay they told Jesus about her. He approached, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them.***" The **God of mercy** had come to visit. Soon the whole town came too. It was an evening of mercy to relieve the sick and suffering of demon possession.

¹ "Nick Vujicic – My Beautiful Life," by Johnny Dodd. *People*, December 15, 2014, pp.127,129

² W.P. ~ Wartburg Project – Matthew popular review (w/o footnotes) the Bible text unless stated otherwise. [M.C. 2/8/2015]

So why do so many people hesitate to pray? Should little kids think, “I’m too small. Why should God care about me?” Should grandmas and grandpas fear, “I don’t want to burden God”? Should busy moms and dads say, “Maybe God is too busy for me”? Should teens worry, “I haven’t been good as I should be, so God won’t want to help me”? No! A thousand times, No! The **God of mercy** is infinite in love for little kids, too strong for anyone old or infirm to ever burden Him. He can process billions of prayers right now. He remembers every prayer since Adam and Eve, plus yours all your life. So how could the **God of mercy** be too busy, Mom and Dad? Teenager, Jesus was also tempted in every way that you are. Growing up was a struggle He shares with you. The fact that He never sinned is the clean and perfect record God put on you in your Baptism. God still sees you sinless and holy by faith in Jesus. So come back to the **God of mercy**; He’s in love with you. You can’t outrun, out live or out ask God’s love. In fact, he *“is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine....”* (Ephesians 3:20 NIV84)

✠ **Man of prayer (vv.35-37)**

Now here’s another reason to pray more and more each day. *“Jesus got up early in the morning, while it was still dark, and went out. He went out to a solitary place and was praying there.”* Why would God’s Son do that? Couldn’t Jesus just think His prayers anywhere and be on the same wavelength as God the Father? Aren’t Father, Son and Holy Spirit all one God? Yes, but Jesus wanted to teach us to pray. More than that, Jesus needed to pray. He was in His State of Humiliation when He gave up the full use of His almighty power and infinite knowledge in order to suffer and die for our sins. Don’t think for a minute that the adoration of the crowds did not tempt Jesus. The easy way out always looks so broad and inviting. Why not just take their praise to heart and keep on healing? Let the people keep cheering. Jesus was the most popular Rabbi around. Couldn’t He just enjoy a little success for once?

The **Man of prayer** prayed for His Father’s help to stay focused on His mission as the Messiah and Savior of the world. That’s why God sent Him. That’s why the Father gave His Son for the world He loved and still loves to save. We know what Jesus prayed because the Psalms are full of the Messiah’s prayers 1000 years before He was born of the Virgin Mary. For just one example read Psalm 109, where the hatred of the Jewish leaders and Judas’ betrayal are foretold. Jesus the Messiah prayed, *“Help me, O LORD my God; save me in accordance with your love....With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD; in the great throng I will praise him. For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save his life from those who condemn him.”* (Psalm 109:26,30f NIV84) God heard and reminded Jesus that He was...

✠ **Called to preach (vv.38-39)**

It must have seemed so strange to Peter and the others to find Jesus praying and say, *“Everyone is looking for you.”* Instead of coming back to Capernaum, Jesus *told them, “Let’s go somewhere else, to the neighboring villages, so I can preach there too. In fact, that is why I have come.” Then he went throughout the whole region of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*

Sometimes it scares me when people say, “I like New Life because it’s a small congregation where everyone knows everyone.” I love you too, but are we forgetting God did not put us here to sit and enjoy each other’s company? You are **Called to preach** in private to bring God’s fellowship to your relatives and friends, known by you, but not the rest of us. Neighbors have moved in with kids still growing up without God’s Word. How will they learn to **Bring their Ills to Jesus** without someone inviting them? How will they know Jesus is not too busy for them unless they learn the awesome Sunday School stories about the **God of mercy**? How can they pray unless they are caught and taught by the **Man of prayer**. How can they share the inspiring grace of God unless they learn that all Christians are **Called to preach** in private. No arms or legs? God gave you a mouth. Praise the Lord! Amen.