

The Master's Plan for Healing

✦ from the curse (vv.17-19)

✦ to be blessed! (vv.20-26)

In the Name of Jesus our shining Epiphany Lord and Master, dearly beloved disciples:

Last Sunday we had some fun with ice fishing. You know I don't actually think the fish have convocations and pass resolutions to run away whenever I take to the water. **The Master's Plan for Fishing** was all about our Lord Jesus making pro-fisherman Peter and friends into "fishers of men" who would bring them into the net of Christ's kingdom. This was not lost on the parishioner who sent me a text with thanks for the sermon and a request. Along with the picture of a friend by his ice fishing house, he asked that I kindly not come to the lake that afternoon.

Aren't you glad that God's own Son came to earth to experience all this with us? Maybe not ice fishing, but cold and heat, joy and sadness, sickness of those He loved and their grateful relief when released from crippling, deadly ailments. This week our Lord will get more personal than "fishing" with **The Master's Plan for Healing**. Next week most personal in **The Master's Plan for Relationships**. But today without "luck" or superstition and beyond the physicians skill, let's find **Healing**...

✦ from the curse (vv.17-19)

How important are definitions? Every discipline has its own, often with life or death consequences. Some years ago a Chinese medical doctor traveling in America with her husband asked me to read from her medical encyclopedia. She said she could rewind if I had trouble with any words. For forty-five minutes I read as she recorded, then asked why I didn't need to repeat any parts? Hearing that medical words are from the Greek really surprised her. Latin supplied English jurisprudence, Greek our medical vocabulary back to Hippocrates. "But why," I asked, "Do you need me and other pastors to read for you?" "When I return to China, everyone will expect me to know the words," she said. "When American doctors are operating, we all need to speak the same language." Years later she shared that our little recording of "bronchitis" and "pneumonia" had helped to save lives. Words matter.

So what does it really mean to be "cursed" or "blessed"? Instead of accommodating Himself to the culture of the time, as modern critics claim, Jesus turned the world upside down. As the **Master Teacher**, Jesus would repeat previous lessons, which may explain why our text sounds so much like Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7). Our text has been called the *Sermon on the Plain* because Jesus *stood on a level place* to deliver **The Master's Plan for Healing**. All needed this: *a large crowd of his disciples and a large number of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, as well as from the coastal area of Tyre and Sidon* – meaning Gentiles, non-Jews too. We've all felt the effects of sin's **curse**.

These people came to listen to him and to be healed of their diseases. Can you hear the echoes from Isaiah? **"He himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains."** (53:4 CSB) Sometimes there's an obvious connection such as a crippling accident by a drunk driver. But usually we cannot say a sickness comes directly from a certain sin – as Job's friends tried to pin on him, only to be rebuked by God. And to His disciple's question about the man born blind, Jesus replied: **"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that God's works might be revealed in connection with him."** (John 9:3 EHV¹)

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

Our problem is that we humans are too blind to see anything except by contrast. Adam had to name all the animals to learn the concept of “*alone*” by contrast with the animals that came two-by-two. God was as thrilled as Adam when he woke up to see his very own Eve in all her created beauty. People felt the contrast of evil spirits after Jesus cured them. You see, they came not only *to be healed of their diseases*, but first and foremost *to listen to him* who is the Word of God Incarnate. It’s remarkable how often Jesus used the power of touch in **The Master’s Plan for Healing**. A leper begged Jesus, “*Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.*” *Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean.*” (5:12f) No ceremonial uncleanness or even the stench of rotting flesh on a live body could stop Jesus from mastering all pain and suffering. Personally as we hear in other passages, one-by-one *power was coming out from him and healing them all*. And that *power* word in the Greek original is in my Confirmation verse: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*” (Romans 1:16)

Can’t you just hear critics in COVID times? “Right, preacher, but this is the real world.” “Follow the science.” “My doctor says....” Dare to disagree? Suffer “Cancel Culture.” Yet, doctors and scientists disagree with each other. One said, “If a scientific ‘fact’ cannot be disputed, it is no longer science, but dogma.” Problem is that the Creator Himself does exist as our Lord Jesus Christ who rules over death which He defeated that first Easter. And Christ ascended, rules all things from the all powerful right hand of God. “*He sustains all things by his powerful word.*” (Hebrews 1:3) The only question: Will we listen and learn from the **Master – the Way and the Truth and the Life?** He gives **Healing from the curse ...**

✠ to be blessed! (vv.20-26)

Our Epiphany Lord and **Master** shows the flipside of the coin. Our hearts, America’s theology of glory, prosperity churches, political parties, and most preachers today – all disagree with Jesus. We want to end poverty, hunger, weeping, hatred, but Jesus calls everyone “*blessed*” who willingly suffers these *because of the Son of Man*. “*Blessed*” rises high above *happiness* which depends on *happenings*. To be “*blessed*” really means having the assurance of all good from God. “*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.*” (Psalm 118:1) In poverty of spirit He brings His *kingdom-of-God* rule of grace and peace to your heart through Word and sacrament. Your *hunger now* will be *satisfied*, *weeping now* turned to *laughter*, *being hated* turned to *great reward* as “*surely goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.*” (Psalm 23:6)

Should we be disturbed by what Jesus is about to say? No more than if your smoke alarm shatters the night. Or flashing lights and sirens stop in front of your house on fire. Many of Jesus’ hearers thought, “I’m okay” – like pastors and some really great Bible students. Or, “Heh, I went to Lutheran school!” Or, “Don’t worry about me; my father (uncle, friend) was a pastor!” So you’re *rich and comfortable now*? *Well fed, laughing, well spoken of* by all? The next turn is eternal with comfort gone, hunger and thirst in the waterless pit, mourning, *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Luke 13:28), and false prophets with *the false prophet* thrown into the *Lake of Fire...the second death*. (Revelation 19:20; 20:14)

Doctors, politicians, preachers – how do you know who to trust? Look for results as with Job and King David after they repented. Or the Lord to Paul: “*My grace is sufficient for you, because my power is made perfect in weakness.*” Blessing! *Whenever I am weak, then am I strong.*” (2 Corinthians 12:9f) Look for promises kept – like the vast riches of another Lenten season and Wednesday evening worship. Look for “healthy gut” compassion like we’ll see in next Sunday’s sermon for **Relationships**. For now the Great Physician of body and soul wants **Healing** for you as He invites: “*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest....rest for your souls.*” (Matthew 11:28) Amen.