

The Ministry of Healing

by Harris Franklin Rall

Jesus' ministry was characterized by a spirit of compassion and sympathy, and his healing ministry was a demonstration of his power and a way of bringing people to faith and preparing them for the coming kingdom.

Scripture: Mark 1:40

Topics: "Divine Healing", "Spiritual Restoration"

Description

Harris Franklin Rall delves into the contrasting ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, highlighting Jesus' broad humanity, intense sympathy, and his role as the Messiah bringing forgiveness and healing to sinners. Jesus' ministry encompassed both physical healing, addressing demon possession and sickness, and spiritual healing, offering forgiveness to those in need. Despite performing miraculous healings, Jesus prioritized instilling moral and spiritual faith over attracting followers through signs and wonders, emphasizing the importance of genuine faith and insight.

Transcript

We have seen that, like John the Baptist, Jesus was a preacher, and he put his work of preaching and teaching first. But that was not all of Jesus' work, and a study of their lives shows the marked contrast between the two men. Jesus himself notes the difference in quoting the perverse criticism of their common enemies: "John is come neither eating nor drinking, and ye say, He hath a demon. The Son of man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" Back of this caricature lay the truth. John was an ascetic and lived apart. He was "a voice crying in the wilderness." Jesus was a man among men. He had open eyes for the beauties of nature: he notes sunset and storm-clouds and lightning flash, the sprouting wheat and ripening grain, and all the life of out-of-doors. Above all, the world of human life appeals to him. He has his close friends. He craves companions. He accepts hospitality. He is found even at the table of the rich; indeed, to one rich man's home he invites himself (Luke 19:5). He goes to the quiet places for prayer, but he comes back to the crowded ways to live. He chooses busy Capernaum, not little Nazareth, populous Decapolis and not the wilderness. We find him by the lakeside with the fishermen, at the customhouse, in the market place or the synagogue; and everywhere he is talking with men.

Two reasons lie back of this difference between Jesus and John. One lies in the spirit of Jesus, his broad humanity, his intense sympathy. The Gospels show this sympathy again and again: when the sick are brought to him, when he sees the people scattered as sheep without a shepherd, when he flames in anger

against the Pharisees because these leaders are only leading folks astray, "blind leaders of the blind." He will not let the little children be pushed aside. He will not send the multitudes away hungry. He hears the cry of the blind man by the roadside despite the crowds. The second reason lay in Jesus' conception of his work. John was the herald. Jesus was the Messiah. The kingdom was already present in him, if only in its beginning. Men's sins were being forgiven and their sickness healed. That was what the rule of God meant, and that was what he was come for, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." And that was why he pointed the disciples whom John sent to these works (Matt 11:2-6). Thus both Jesus' spirit of sympathy and his idea of his work impelled him to a ministry far broader than that of John.

The ministry of service may be considered under two heads. There is, first, the ministry of healing, in which Jesus dealt with demon possession and other forms of sickness; and there is the ministry of forgiveness which shows Jesus in his relation to sinners.

The Old Testament has little to say about spirits, evil or good. The New Testament world seems to be filled with them. The belief in them came from without, from Persia, in the last couple of centuries before Christ. Men were thought to be in constant danger of having evil spirits enter them. Their presence was the explanation of special forms of disease such as seemed to demand some unusual cause. Among these were particularly mental and nervous disorders, like insanity and epilepsy, as well as diseases like paralysis and leprosy. There seem to have been cases also of moral degeneracy, where we read of unclean spirits.

Mark's Gospel gives us three typical cases. The first occurs in the Capernaum synagogue on that first Sabbath. This may have been a man of evil life, whom Jesus aroused by the power of his appeal. The case served to stir the people and spread Jesus' fame at the very beginning. The second is the man in the Gerasene country across the lake from Capernaum, a case of violent insanity, the poor wretch living as an outcast among the tombs (Mark 5:1-20). The third is a case of epilepsy, that of a boy whom the disciples had first tried in vain to heal.

Such cases of demoniac healing were an undoubted part of Jesus' work. We cannot, of course, be sure of all details. As to Jesus' own conception we cannot tell. So far as ordinary knowledge is concerned, we find him elsewhere sharing the opinions of his time. In any case his religious insight here is true. The evil spirits are here only to be overcome. There is no room for the superstition and fear which usually goes with the belief in demons, only the perfect confidence in the power and goodness of his Father.

The same day at Capernaum brings to Jesus the second class of the needy to whom he ministered, the sick. Returning home after the synagogue service, he heals Peter's mother-in-law, whom he finds ill with a fever. This, joined to the case of the demoniac, rouses the city. No sooner is the sun set and the Sabbath over, according to Jewish reckoning, than they begin bringing the sick to the door of Peter's house for Jesus to heal. Mark does not say that he healed them all, but that "he healed many that were sick with divers diseases and cast out many demons."

It was enough to still further move the city. Jesus had no need to fear a lack of following. A great ministry seemed to be opening to him at Capernaum. But Jesus judged the situation differently. Here were the elements of danger that he had fought against in his temptation. It was not a spiritual following won by his message. It was a popular and outward success won by these signs of power. And Jesus puts it aside. He will not become a worker of signs. His great work is not here. It is to bring to men's minds a vision of God, to their hearts a new spirit in preparation for the coming Kingdom. The crowds that come early in the

morning do not find him. He has been meeting this new crisis, as he met the first, in a desert place in prayer. His decision is ready when the disciples find him: "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth" (Mark 1: 38). He does not cease his ministry of healing. He is moved with compassion when the leper comes. But he charges him sternly to tell no man about it (Mark 1:40-45).

These stories of healing have been the cause of a great deal of discussion. Scholars of all kinds today are generally inclined to admit them. They are so deeply embedded in the gospel narratives that they could hardly be taken out without giving up the entire gospel story. How they were wrought it is neither necessary nor possible for us to determine. It is important to notice that Jesus performed these cures out of sympathy for men, and not to attract men or win their faith. He did not want a following that was due to signs and wonders. He wanted a moral and spiritual faith and insight. Such a faith is still of most importance with his followers.

Directions for Reading and Study

Read and compare the three stories of the healings of demoniacs found in Mark 1:23-27; 5:1-20; 9:14-29.

Does Jesus' word of healing seem to have been conditioned by what he found in others? Illustrate answer from following passages: Luke 7:1-10; Mark 5:21-43; 10:46-52; Matt 15:21-28.

Note Jesus' motive in this ministry as given Matt 9:35-38.

Make a list of the passages in the first eight chapters of Mark which refer to the crowds about Jesus, noting the indications as to the reasons for his popularity.

What was Jesus' attitude as to the demand for miracles, and his estimate of their value in his work? Read Matt 12:38-42 and note Mark 5:43; 7:36; 8:26.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/harris-franklin-rall/the-ministry-of-healing/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net