

The Symptoms and The Causes

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 June 2017

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 0 0] Now in this fifth chapter of Luke's account of the gospel, we read the first 26 verses, and the context of this passage that we read is early on in Jesus' ministry, and everything is still new, everything is still comparatively fresh, people are still wowed by his healings and by his teachings, because this is early days, and even if we happen to be converted people ourselves, we know that the early first flash of conversion, the early stage of that great work of Christ in our hearts is a time of just wondrous blessing, a time when everything looks different, there is that glow of grace upon it.

Now Jesus is still already at this stage beginning to attract opposition, but it is still early days. If we turn back a couple of pages, we see just how early on this is.

In chapter 3 of Luke's account of the gospel, we have the account of John's ministry and of Jesus' baptism. You know, it's that early on. And then in chapter 4, we have the temptation in the wilderness and the return to Nazareth and the beginning of his public ministry.

It's in his hometown of Nazareth that he begins to preach the good news of the kingdom. That's what we read from verse 16 onwards in chapter 4.

But in Nazareth, he is rejected. It's just a bit too much for the swallow that the local boy made good. It's now actually telling them what they should be believing and how they should understand God's word, saying that it's actually fulfilled in him of all people.

[1 : 4 2] So he is rejected there. So he goes down to Capernaum. Chapter 4, verse 31, we read. He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.

At the same time, we have the healing of the man with the unclean spirit. And then we read, in verse 37, the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

Word is beginning to spread about Jesus of Nazareth. It is beginning to go out. And no internet, remember, no radio broadcasts, no TV.

It's just word of mouth. Eyewitnesses and second-hand accounts. It's spreading out like wildfire. This person who can actually cast out devils, who actually expounds the written word of God.

It doesn't just say, well, one rabbi thinks this, and another rabbi thinks that. And all the holy people will gather in a corner, in a huddle, and they'll all discuss till the cows come home what might be the right interpretation of this wee text here.

[2 : 4 3] No, he goes straight to the heart. As the author of it, he is able to expound, this is what it means. This is what it says. This is the fulfillment, and I know it because I'm the author.

I inspire it. This is Jesus, God the Son. And it's a breath of fresh air throughout Galilee. Not just in the opening up of the word, but in the healing of those who are thus afflicted.

Further, healings follow the same day. And in the evening, and then Peter's mother-in-law and multitudes of others, sick and demon-possessed, are healed.

And then we read in verse 42 of chapter 4, when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place. And the people sought him and came unto him and stayed him that he should not depart from them.

And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also. For therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee. So now in chapter 5, we have crowds gathered, indeed pressing upon Jesus.

[3 : 50] It came to pass as the people pressed upon him, not on this occasion looking to be healed. But rather we are told especially that the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God.

That is what they have come for on this occasion. They are coming to hear the word expound. They want to hear about God. They want to hear about what his written word says. And they want to hear it opened up.

That's the reason they're pressing on. They know they have a need. And we know from verse 43 of chapter 4 that this is what, in Jesus' own words, as far as he is concerned, this is why he came.

I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also. For therefore am I sent. That is what he himself says. It was primarily to preach the word of God, the good news, that Jesus came.

Same again in chapter 1 of Mark's account of the Gospel, verse 38. He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also. For therefore came I forth.

[4 : 55] That is what he came forth. In his own words. In his own words. Now it would be tempting to think in terms then of the healings and the casting out of the demons and so on.

As a means to get people's attention. So that they become a willing and attentive audience. And it wouldn't be wrong if Jesus had done that. You know, that's how many medical missions still operate today.

If they've got a clinic or a hospital or whatever. And it's healing people. It's helping people. And providing the sick with a means of recovery. And of course, they're more likely to think well for the love of Christ to be seen in action.

At the same time as meeting a very real physical need. It would be very strange if those who had been helped in such a way did not become more naturally disposed to listen to the teaching of their missionaries.

So it's not an illegitimate thing. Even if that is what Jesus had done. But the context here would suggest that that's not so much the evidence. It's not that these healings and these casting out of demons and so on.

[6 : 03] That this is sort of a means to grab attention. With Jesus, it is deeper than that. The healings and the teaching are both part of the same message.

I'll say that again. The healings and the teachings are both part of the same message. We go back to Mark chapter 1. See verses 38 and 39. Let us go to the next times.

That I may preach there also. For therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee. And cast out devils. That casting out of the devil goes hand in hand with the proclamation of the word of God.

And then he goes on to give Mark's account of the healing of the leper and so on. The cleansing of a man who is chronically sick. The one is not an offshoot of the other like the branch of a tree in that sense.

But rather the teaching and preaching on the one hand and the healing and casting out of demons on the other are as the twin prongs of a meat fork. If you like.

[7 : 08] Or perhaps more appropriately we might say is the two razor sharp edges of the same sword. And the sword of the spirit.

That sword with which the enemy of souls is fought and wounded and defeated and ultimately decapitated. The sword of the spirit as we read in Ephesians 6 with the armor of God there of course is the word of God.

When Jesus expounds the word of God. When the word comes alive. That is part and parcel of what pushes back the kingdom of Satan.

When he confronts a particular demon or devil. It's just the logical outcome that Jesus confronts the devil and the devil flees. He has to. He's got no option.

He cannot take on Christ. Christ in his physical person or Christ the word made flesh. It doesn't really matter. It is still Christ at work.

[8 : 09] And it is still that before which the devil cannot stand. So the one is not an offshoot of the other like two edges. Two razor sharp edges of the same sword of the spirit.

And it came to pass as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God. He stood by the way to Knesset. That is why they're there. They want to see it.

They want to hear it expound it. They want to see it in action. They want to have some hope that God is still speaking into their present day. That God is still speaking into their lives and into their ordinary work situations.

Their real lives where they are. It's not just something you do in the synagogue on the Sabbath. It's not just something for the rabbis and the learned men and all the obtrusive little texts they may be discussing.

This is something that is for real life and real people in real time. It is just as much our need, if not more so, in the 21st century as it was in the 1st century.

[9 : 09] It is still the same word of God. It is still the same power of Christ. The word of God which is declared is the good news of sin forgiven.

The reconciliation between God and man. Now, sin forgiven. Sin is not bad things that we do or think or say.

Those are just the symptoms of the real problem, the real issue. Sins in the plural are just the symptom of sin itself in the singular, the definition.

And sin is separation from God. Just like death is separation from God. When we are parted from God, that is sin in itself.

It is sin that pulls us away from God. And death gets in because of that sin. Sin and death are the same. They went to the same thing. Separation from God.

[10 : 06] Sickness, disease, deformity, death. These do not come upon people because of bad things that they have done. But because they are separated from God.

John chapter 9. Remember, we read this account. As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin?

This man or his parents? That he was born blind. Jesus answered, Neither have this man sinned nor his parents. Now, it doesn't mean they're sinless, of course. It means it's not for a particular sin that they've done that this has happened.

But that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work.

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Then, of course, he goes on to heal the man born blind. And the whole chapter, John 9, is all about that.

[11 : 07] In God dwells all light. Jesus says, While I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. All the light that can possibly be his focus, centred in God himself.

All the light that he has created is to express something of who that he is. All the beauty that he has created is to express the beauty of his own holiness.

The creativity, the loveliness of all that is in himself. In God dwells all light and health and wholeness and goodness and peace and harmony.

Absolutely. To an infinite degree. He is the definition, the personification of these things. God doesn't so much possess these things.

These attributes. He doesn't possess goodness or health or well-being. He is these things. He is holiness. He is power.

[12 : 05] He is goodness in and of himself. And so all that peace, that flows out from him. And there is no source of these things outside of God.

He is these things to the nth degree. Absolutely. Completely. He is these things. In God there can be no imperfection.

No sickness. No illness. No suffering. Or death in and of himself. You might think, ah, well, wait a minute though. You must be wrong there because Jesus suffered wounding and death upon the cross.

Yes, Jesus suffered that in his flesh. Jesus was holy God and holy man. It was impossible for God himself to die in and of himself.

Just as it was not possible for man in and of himself to bear the price of sin. But fuse the two together in the perfect God-man.

[13 : 05] And you have a God-man who is able to die because he is human. And likewise you have a man, a human being, who is able to pay the infinite price because he is God.

Unless you have this complete, perfect fusion of the two. Unless you have one who is holy God and holy man. There can be no forgiveness. There can be no salvation.

There can be no price paid. There can be no death upon the cross. Because the wages of sin is death. God cannot die in and of himself. Man cannot pay a price in and of himself.

This is why we need the two together in this one perfect God-man. God cannot have imperfection or sickness or illness or suffering or death in himself.

Similarly, can you imagine hell containing within it any kind of health or wholeness or well-being or jobs? Some people comfort themselves or fancy themselves that hell will be all.

[14 : 14] We have a great big party and we'll just get to be as bad as we like. And nothing will touch us. None of this holiness or religion or anything. We just get to enjoy ourselves. There is nothing to enjoy in hell.

Because there is no joy in hell. There is no wholeness. There is no well-being. There is no enjoyment in hell. Just as in God there is all life.

That's what the Bible says. In him was life and the life was the light of man. So in hell there is only an ongoing death that never really dies. A permanent, painful and ongoing state of being forever dying yet never hold me dead because the soul lives on.

And here we are upon this fallen earth suspended as it were between heaven and hell for a brief few years. Between eternal life and eternal death.

Knowing the presence of light yet so often choosing to walk in darkness. Recognizing perhaps the light of the world yet not receiving him.

[15 : 23] Separated by sin from God's purity and heavenly perfection. And dwelling thus in a world characterized by dis-peace, dis-harmony, dis-honor, dis-ease and disgrace.

Sin brings all these miseries in its evil train. Yet are we not wholly forsaken.

God so loved the world. Remember as we mentioned in prayer. That he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish.

Should not die eternally but have everlasting life. For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world. But that the world through him might be saved. Jesus didn't come and say, you, you're really in trouble.

You, what a sinner you are. You had it. And you, and you, not a chance. Never once does Jesus say this. He comes rather that people might be saved.

[16 : 25] Regardless of their background. Regardless of how much they know or how rich or who they are. Jesus said, remember, as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Jesus ministered both to body and to spirit. And Jesus, who is himself yet in the world. Just in case we're thinking, well, that's all very well. He says, as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

But he's not in the world anymore, is he? He's ascended into heaven. He's gone. So we don't have him now, do we? Yes, we do. Jesus said, it is expedient for you, said to his disciples, that I go away.

Because if I don't go away, the comforter will not come. The comforter, his spirit. The spirit of the Father and the Son, who is, if we can say it reverently, more powerful in his work upon earth than Jesus in the days of his flesh.

And I don't say that with any irreverence. But rather in the recognition that Jesus, as long as he is physically in the world, is by definition constrained by his physical body.

[17 : 34] While he is in Caesarea Philippi, he cannot be in Jerusalem. While he is in Jerusalem, he cannot be in Nazareth. While he is in Galilee, he cannot be on the side of the Mediterranean Sea, Gaza, wherever it may be.

He cannot be in two places at once, whilst he is physically bound by his earthly body. But the spirit of Christ is able to be in multitudes of places at once.

Is able to minister simultaneously to people in China, and people in Scotland, and in Ireland, and in America, and in South Africa, and all over the world.

The spirit of Christ is able to visit, and empower, and cure, and heal, and convert, at all times and in all places. This is why we say that when the Comforter comes, the spirit of Christ, Christ is at work, and alive, and more powerful then.

That's, I suggest to you what he means when he says to his disciples, greater things than these shall ye do. He said to his disciples when he had gone. He is the light of the world as long as he is in the world, and by his spirit he is still in the world.

[18 : 45] By his spirit he was able then, and is able now, to strike at the very root cause of this suffering and death that keeps mankind in bondage.

Heal the cause, and you heal the symptoms. The one follows inevitably from the other. Thus, we have, for example, further on in this chapter, which we read, the man with the palsy lowered through the roof.

And Luke makes mention of tiling. Probably it wasn't tiles as such. Luke, remember, is a European. He's a Gentile. He would have known only the sort of Greek, Roman kind of style of housing which they had in Western Asia and in Europe, as opposed to the way that people constructed their homes in Galilee in the first century.

So the point is that he's down through the roof. This man is let, whether it's tiling, whether there were tiles in addition to it, whatever. He is let down through the roof. And this is to show, demonstrating their faith.

And Jesus, when he saw their faith, said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. He goes straight to the root of the problem, because what is the root cause of all illness and disharmony and dis-ease and all physical and mental and psychological suffering in this world?

[20 : 07] It is our separation from God. It is the fact that God in all his wholeness and purity and perfection and health and well-being is there and we are not here. We are separated from God by our sin.

Heal the cause and you heal the symptoms. Reunite and reconcile man with God. Take away the cause. You take away the symptoms.

This is the unique work of Christ. The scribes and Pharisees began to reason and say, Who is this which speak of blasphemies? Who can give sins but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason are you in your hearts?

Whether it's easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, he said to the sick of the palsy. I said unto thee, Rise, take up thy couch, go on to thy house.

And immediately he rose up before them, took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. This is the unique work of Christ.

[21 : 10] We should not, however, misinterpret it to mean that all who received healing of body from Jesus automatically received salvation at the same time.

Remember, if you will, when he healed the ten lepers, one returned to give thanks to him, and he was a Samaritan the other night. Ah, they just went on their way rejoicing. Very glad to be healed and not giving a thought to Jesus.

And there are plenty who will receive the benefits of what Jesus would do in this world who don't want anything to do with him himself. We just have to look at how the freedoms that we have in this country, you know, the comparatively peaceful democratic government, the Christian basis and foundation for all of our laws and societies, these are being chipped away at, these are being deconstructed.

If people don't want anything to do with the God who is the origin of these laws, they think they can do better with what is happening. Well, we see what's happening in society. You take all the cement from out of the bricks and then you wonder why the wall starts falling down.

It's not lack of funding or lack of investment in education or NHS or this or the armed forces or that or industry or whatever it may be. It's that we have dumbed down our entire society because we have taken God out of the picture.

[22 : 35] In a day when we fed God into our children's school, we fed the Christian gospel, the Christian Bible, the Christian message, people grew up literate, comparatively educated, able to communicate.

They grew up knowing right from wrong, darkness from light. And now they are fed a media-intensified load of worldly anti-Christian garbage.

Most of it is complete lies. Absolute, complete opposite of the truth. And we wonder why our society is the way that it is. You deal with the cause and you deal with the symptoms.

Now just because Jesus says thy sins are forgiven, this man that is completely healed, doesn't mean that everybody whose sins are forgiven likewise will never have a problem health-wise. A 75-year-old with aches and pains will suddenly become like a 25-year-old again.

No, they won't. Because the product of age and decay and so on is still there in this world. Likewise, Paul himself was still afflicted with the thorn in his flesh for which he besought the Lord three times that it should be taken from him.

[23 : 48] But the Lord answered, my grace is sufficient for him. There was a reason for that thorn in his flesh. There is a reason for those afflictions which the Lord still permits in our lives.

We may not see the purpose. Often we don't. And we may cry against him and we may pray that these things be taken from us and we may wonder why God doesn't take them from us or doesn't yet.

But he will have his purpose and he will have his reason. And it doesn't, at the end of the day, unduly matter which side of the razor-sharp sword of the Spirit defeats Satan and chops off his limbs or head or whatever.

Whether it is the forgiveness of our sin but we still have to bear some physical discomfort or illness or pain for a time in this world. Whether it is the healing of our physical ailments or whatever along with the forgiveness of our sin or sometimes some people are miraculously given exactly what they asked for.

They're healed and they think wasn't that brilliant? Wasn't that great? And they had prayed about it and then they just forget about God and say oh well it was going to happen anyway. Wasn't that lucky? Now God must be so tired of people taking him for granted in this way.

[25 : 07] But the unique work of Christ is that he deals with the cause of our problem our separation from God and the symptoms follow on from that.

We shouldn't presume that automatically the forgiveness of our sin or conversion will mean we never have another problem physically or in terms of our body and in terms of affliction or whatever the case may be manifested this is not so.

But we do know that all things work together for good to them that love God to those who are called according to his purpose. That's what he says in his word.

Many who were healed may well have been saved in Jesus' day and many saved may also know great healing. But if the hand of Satan which held us in bondage is severed can we afford to quibble over which side of the resurrected sword of the spirit deliver the faith of God.

if we are healed great. Use your health and your well-being and your comparative strength to serve the Lord who has healed you.

[26 : 15] Use it to follow him. Remember blind Bartimaeus whose eyes were opened and he followed Jesus in the way straight away. That's what he did with his new sight. He used it to follow Jesus.

What is it that you want to do with the health, with the power, with the freedom, with the healing that you may ask God for? Will it be good at his disposal or is it just to make our life more comfortable?

If there is a reason why we must still bear this particular cross we will continue to bear it and eventually the Lord will make it clear to us why we have to bear it. But if we are in a better position to serve him if it is lifted we will lift it.

But let it all be for his sake and for his glory. We need the word of God to heal us to save us and we need the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver it.

See a minister or a preacher can talk till he's blue in the faces I'm sure you're well aware of but a soul will only be converted and saved on the day when it is Christ Jesus who speaks the word into the heart.

[27 : 25] When it is Christ Jesus who works in their life in their mind in their spirit and soul to convert them and to change them and the universal I imagine reaction of those who are suddenly changed how didn't I see that before?

I've heard this a hundred times how didn't I recognize how did I see that that's what these words meant that that's how it applied it's so clear now how doesn't everybody see this?

I can see it as clear as day now because that's the work of Christ. A preacher a minister he can speak and speak and speak and speak he can preach for years and nothing may happen but suddenly Christ speaks it and it changes the heart changes the life of God we may be ever so close and still not close enough remember King Agrippa Acts 26 verse 28 Paul says to him King Agrippa believest thou the prophets?

I know that thou believest then Agrippa said to Paul almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian those of you who know the John Bunyan book Pilgrim's Progress will know that's in the account of Christian on his way to the celestial city there is following one from him I can't remember the name of the individual who's trying to cheat his way up to heaven and he ends up falling through to hell in a wee side door that is almost at the very foot of the walls of the celestial city there is a way to hell from the very gate of heaven just as well as there is from a way down here and some people fall at the last hurdle just as there would have been people if we think back to when we looked a year or two ago at Noah and the flood there would have been people who were almost at the very door of the ark coming on saying let us in let us in but God had shut the door they would have been almost safe they would have been hanging on perhaps to the end and their fingers scraping down the edge of the slimy wood before finally landing in the water unable to get back up just as surely as those who were miles away and had no chance you can perish just as easily six inches from glory and grace as you can from six thousand miles away just as you can drown in six inches of water just as surely as you can and six thousand pounds whichever way it is it's not enough to be almost thou who persuadest me to be a Christian it's not enough to come close but never step off onto the vessel of faith of the of the jetty or of the wharf you've got to come into Christ oh well I don't know that's a bit of a risk yes it's a risk yes you just don't know faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen that's what faith is oh we're risking an awful lot what do you think

Christ risked for us the word of God which opens up his truth is that with which we must meet the attacks of Satan because God's word will always be true and Satan cannot deal with truth he is the father of lies when Jesus is tempted in the wilderness he responds by quoting God's word quoting truth quoting scripture it is written it is written it is written and Satan flees from him because all the suggestions of well you don't really need to do it this way you can always do this you can always do that you can have this and have it all what does God's word say if Satan says black and God's word says white you may still choose the black you may still choose to go down the road of what the world and your own flesh and the devil may whisper in your ear but it is not because you don't know better

[31 : 25] God still speaks his truth if God says it in his word it will be true if the world or the flesh or the devil or the media says it it may also be true if it is in line with God's word but if it is different from God's word it will be false God's word is never false God's word is always true there is that which you know to be true and there is that which may or may not be true and the world and the prince of this world may or may not be true but he is the father of lies remember that that God's word will always be true this is what people were hungering and thirsting for in Jesus' day came to pass as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God he stood by the lake of Gennesaret we need the word of God to heal us to save us we need the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver it it's not enough to be close and all most are persuaded to be a Christian what were the disciples doing in the meantime while Jesus is busy speaking to the people in the beginning of Luke chapter 5 they were busy washing their nets two ships standing by the lake the fishermen were going out of them and washing their nets

I'm sure they were listening as well while they're busy working away at the lake at the side of the shore there and listening to Jesus while he's speaking but working away at an everyday job and when the preaching is over it's back to work wearily perhaps but taking Jesus on board nothing special about that nothing major cast out the net says Jesus and these are seasoned and experienced fishermen saying well look we've done it before Jesus you know you're a carpenter you're not a fisherman we've done this we've done it all night and we didn't catch anything but if you want us to fine fine master we have toiled all night have taken nothing nevertheless at thy word I will let down the nets do it now with Jesus before Peter was doing it for himself he was doing it in his own job his own trade nothing wrong with that but he didn't have Christ present with him now he is doing it with Jesus now he is doing it at Jesus command now there is a difference see the difference they sat because this launch this cast this work was at his behest and how different it is so it was in the midst of their work their everyday occupation that Christ began to show himself

Lord of every part of life the speaking part was done now it was time to see the work of Christ in action you know sometimes people I remember from my younger days seeing people coming out of church saying you know oh yes I enjoyed that sermon from Mr. So and So or whatever you might think yeah that was great that was wonderful but the application to our lives the following on from our lives the actual involvement of Christ in our day to day life Jesus didn't say to them now leave those nets boys and come to the synagogue and I'll open up this scroll of the book of the prophet Isaiah and we'll talk about it together now he says launch out into the deep he says you know cast out your nets let's do what you do guys let's do your job and let's see the difference now when I Jesus am at the heart of your everyday life the speaking part was done but is the word preached forgotten or is it put into action in your everyday life what is Jesus saying to the disciples in the church say well you've been washing your nets presumably you aren't just washing them for fun so they'd be nice and sparkly clean it was so they'd be useful for the next stage of work let's put them to work we were busy washing the nets while I'm speaking does that mean they're more important than me okay maybe maybe not let's go and put them to work let's see what they do now use them and then see this is the message

Jesus is giving look you can wash your nets till you're blue in the face you can sail on but you can't catch nothing I can supply your every need if I am there you can have as many fish as you want if I am there your business can flourish I can bless Joseph and make him in Potiphar's house the most prosperous servant in the entire land of Egypt I can make every field fruitful and bountiful for Isaac so that it brings forth a hundred fold I can bless Abraham with flocks and herds I can make my servants prosper in this world as much as I want if I choose that's not a problem that's the easy bit the question is are you prepared to put your life your work your business what you do at my disposal are you prepared to put Christ into every part of your life I can supply your every need that's the unspoken message here that Jesus is giving to Peter he's terrified by what he sees this is a power beyond him he says the power from me

Lord I'm a sinful man just let me get on with my life don't invade it like this and Jesus says fear not Peter don't be afraid from hence thou shalt catch men Jesus says to him from henceforth thou shalt catch men don't be afraid my involvement in your life is not something to run from Jesus says my involvement in your life is not something to be afraid of something to welcome it's something which is only going to bless you which is only going to make your work more prosperous more blessed more meaningful but that's the easy bit I've got better things for you I've got more than I want to do in your life I've got more than I want to invest in you I've got more than I want to give you I can supply your every need never fear for lack of food or lack of supply or lack of work I'll give you work to do follow me and you'll have everything you need such is my power that is Jesus' words to his disciples

[37 : 32] Jesus' work Jesus' involvement with his disciples' life their ordinary everyday work that he wants to transform there is nobody beyond his reach he heals the leper and he doesn't just say well that's you healed now what does he do he directs him back to the word of God when the leper says Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me clean he put forth his hands and said I will be thou clean he charged them to tell no man but go and show thyself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing according as Moses commanded for a testimony unto them now you have to look at Leviticus 13 and 14 to see all the rules that there are for what you're meant to do if you're a leper cleansed from your leprosy it's long and it's complicated and it's not the easiest thing in the world to do but if you're truly rejoicing and being healed in your leprosy that's the least of it if somebody had said to you the day before tomorrow you'll be healed of your leprosy ah but there's a catch you have to go and do exactly what the law says you have to go and offer the offerings and the sacrifices you have to shave off all your hair and wash your flesh in water you have to stay apart for a week and then the priest looks at you and then he pronounces you clean and then you're all done and then you're completely whole and you're back into the society again

Jesus doesn't say ah don't worry about the law I'll deal you that's it he says go and show yourself to the priest do it right do it by the book there is a procedure to follow and I'm directing you to my father's word I'm directing you to the word of God there's a right way to do this go and do it he directs him back into the teaching of God's word and the Pharisees and scribes how do they relate to us well we think oh we're not like that well hopefully we're not like that but they would represent perhaps people who have been brought up with the word of God people who do know the scriptures who do know what they say in terms of their head but perhaps have not yet been touched or converted in the heart I love the way that the authorised version puts it here it says you know that there were scribes and Pharisees doctors of the law sitting by which were coming out of every town of Galilee Judea and Jerusalem and the power of the Lord was present to heal them now some people try and turn that and say well it doesn't mean them it means the people who are waiting on Jesus and ready to be healed the power of the Lord was ready to heal them and then it goes on to talk about the man who was brought and let down through the roof that's not what it says it says the power of the Lord was present to heal them the scribes and the Pharisees and the doctors of the law they needed healing too they also needed to be born again all their knowledge of God's word and his truth and his scriptures it wouldn't save them all their good living lives all their religious upbringing it wouldn't save them it wouldn't be enough at the end of the day they too needed to be healed they too needed to be converted but here's the riches of God's grace it was every bit as much for them as it was for the obvious sinner or the outcast or the leper or whoever in society everyone is included in God's offer of grace the power of God was present to heal them too

God is rich and merciful to Paul without wanting to delay on Julian I realise our time was gone one of the things that used to hold me back in the days of my youth from commitment to Christ is I thought God couldn't be interested in somebody as ordinary as me if I had been a super saint and a really holy person I would think yep God would be pleased with someone like that God would be pleased with me if I were a saintly holy person but I'm not and if I was a drug addict or a criminal or somebody who was really down and out and completely at my wits end in society and had nowhere to turn like the prodigal son then my conversion would be dramatic and that would give glory to God and God would be interested in me because I would really be somebody taken from the dregs and brought up and that would be such a witness such a testimony he would be interested in a person like that but I'm not at either end of the spectrum here I am just dead or in the middle

God's not going to be bothered with me but God is bothered with each one of us we are precious in his sight God so loved the world now there are bad criminal people in the world and there are those who are down and outs and wastrels and prodigals and there are those who are immoral and who are drug dealers and traffickers and all the rest of it but there's an awful lot of dead ordinary people very very ordinary people out there in the world in all countries and societies and lands and nations and in islands such as this and the Lord loves every single one of them and the Lord desires to be involved in the life of every single one of them in their daily life in their work in their toil in their calling in their vocation to take it and to transform it and to make it all that it could be if Christ is at work in it you don't have anything to fear by acting in faith when he had left speaking he said unto Simon launch out into the deep and let down your nets when I dropped it that I would suggest to you is what the Lord is calling all of us to do stop paddling on the shore now where you can always run back if you get scared launch out into the deep where the only thing now that you have to trust on is the person present with you who has promised never to leave you or forsake you it's Jesus for this time