

Sermon preached by Rev Mark Charleston at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney
on Wednesday 28th February 2007. Reading Mark: 7
Topic: "A Preacher Who Heals or a Healer Who Preaches?"

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD?

- *I see trees of green, red roses too, I've seen them bloom, for me and for you. And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.*
- Yes – it is a wonderful world; a world that a loving God has made. And yet alongside all the beauty, all that is good, there is much that is very bad.
- **Winston Churchill** spoke these solemn words in the House of Commons in 1950:
Man in this moment of his history has emerged in greater supremacy over the forces of nature than has ever been dreamed before. He has it in his power to solve quite easily the problem of natural existence. He has conquered the wild beasts, and he has even conquered the insects and the microbes. There lies before him, if he wishes, a golden age of peace and progress. All is in his hand. He has only to conquer his last and worst enemy – himself. These words have a contemporary reality about them. Over the centuries, we have proved ourselves incapable of defeating this last & worst enemy.
- **Robert Louis Stevenson**, creator of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, once wrote: "I have called my character Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. I could have just as well have called him Robert Louis Stevenson."

We are all capable of both good and evil, and no matter what we do, we have never been able to remove the "Hyde" from our personality. There is something deeply wrong with humanity. With ourselves! We cannot blame God for it! We know that we are not machines, programmed to behave in a certain way! We have a choice about how we live our lives! We know that there is something fundamentally wrong with us! BUT we were not always like this!

REBELLION IN THE GARDEN

Adam & Eve had enjoyed life in the Garden of Eden in perfect relationship with God. In Genesis 3, we discover what went wrong.

At the invitation of the serpent, the woman & man **doubt** God's Word, **deny** his goodness to them and **disobey** his will. God had given them one command (Genesis 2:16)

YET the invitation from the serpent is very attractive. Adam & Eve want to know good and evil – not in the sense that they want to know the difference between right and wrong. They already have a sense of right and wrong, otherwise God would not have told them to stay away from that tree!

"Knowledge of good and evil" is not about knowing the difference between right and wrong. **It is all about DECIDING what is right and wrong!! Sin is not simply a case of breaking God's law! It is no less than that – but it is more than that!**

⇒ It is an act of blatant rebellion

⇒ Not simply a legal situation with God as the 'divine policeman', but a relational one.

Sin = Usurping (rejecting) God's right to make the rules. And, brothers & sisters, the Bible tells us that this rebellion in the Garden of Eden involves us **us profoundly.** (Romans 5:12)

There is a solidarity between Adam and all of us. His sin affected his descendants. We are born into a world deeply committed to sin, and from the very youngest age, our own predisposition is also to rebel against authority and do things our own way. Listen to David's words in **Psalm 51:** Surely I was sinful **at birth**, sinful from the time my mother **conceived me ...**

All this is not to say that we are not responsible for our rebellion against God! While we are naturally disposed to sin, the Bible also makes it clear that we each choose, wilfully and deliberately, to rebel against God. **The devil doesn't make me do it!** (Romans 5:12) Even in Romans 5, where Paul emphasises that condemnation came to all men through the sin of Adam, there also peeps through the responsibility that each of us has for our sin. **Death came to all men – in verse 12 - because all sinned.**

Me: A pretty good kid! Mum & Dad would say so. But I got the shock of my life when I was 9 years of age and sitting on my bed at home read this prayer:

Almighty and most merciful Father,

We have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have left undone what we ought to have done,

And have done what we ought not to have done.

*We have followed our own ways **and the desires of our own hearts.***

Sin is a deep-rooted problem ... a heart issue! Nation of Israel in the OT: Classic example.

Yes! Our sin is a heart issue requiring heart surgery! We need a divine version of Dr. Victor Chang!

In tonight's Bible reading, (Mark 7) we read of **Jesus in Galilee** and his encounter with the Pharisees and some scribes from Jerusalem. The Pharisees and scribes were **men who loved to "wash-up"**! I have never met a man who loved to "wash-up" but here we have a story of certain men who took washing up very seriously indeed!

Of course, these men pursued cleanliness for religious reasons. In fact, they pursued cleanliness for the sake of **religious tradition** – not because of the Word of God. The OT Law taught that priests had to wash to avoid defilement, yet these religious rulers wanted everyone to wash like the temple priests. And, in doing this – in going beyond Scripture - they lost their way! By focusing on the externals, they forgot the internal issue. **They forgot what sin really is!**

I wonder whether we can be like that? We can do that whenever we elevate our opinions or ideas over God's opinions and ideas. Yes – these religious leaders loved to "wash-up", but only on the "outside"!! By inviting these scribes – or "theological hitmen" up from Jerusalem, the religious leaders wanted to teach Jesus a thing or two. **But Jesus is the one who does the preaching! (V14)** **Jesus' disciples had difficulty understanding Jesus's teaching. So in verse 20, we see what Jesus says to his disciples:**

The religious leaders had tragically redefined 'sin'! They had forgotten that sin is something **internal rather than external**. Or, at the very least, they had misconstrued what the human problem really is! Righteousness or right standing with God is not found in self-effort or self-achievement. And it is certainly not found when one neglects the Word of God, elevating traditional opinion and practices over the truth!

SPIRITUAL DIAGNOSIS IS CRUCIAL! Thus, accurate spiritual diagnosis is crucial! If you don't see our internal problem of sin, then you'll never see what's required to resolve it! We need to see ourselves as creatures that have each usurped God's right to make the rules! There is something profoundly wrong with us spiritually. **S.I.N. causes SINS => Billy Graham. "Our rebellion is so serious that we need someone outside ourselves to rescue us! We cannot rescue ourselves from sin by education, culture, morality or other forms of self-effort. We need to be born again! NOT just a fresh start – BUT a fresh heart! And only Christ Jesus can save us!"**

American Christian, Don Carson: *"If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic, he would have sent an economist. If he had perceived that our greatest need was entertainment, he would have sent us a comedian or artist. If God had perceived that our greatest need was political stability, he would have sent us a politician. If he had perceived that our greatest need was health, he would have sent us a doctor. But he perceived that our greatest need involved our sin, our alienation from him, our profound rebellion, our death; and he sent us a Saviour".*

Recalling Mark 1

Come back with me to Mark 1:14-15. You see, **the first thing** that Jesus does is not to set up a hospital! Not a social club! Not a bureaucracy! The first thing that Jesus does is **to preach!** It's astonishing when you think that God had only one (1) Son and he makes him a preacher!

It's not surprising that Mark spends so much space talking about Jesus' teaching in Mark 7 before recounting the two healing stories.

The Two Miracles of Mark 7 And that brings us to the two short healing stories of Mark 7. We can forget what it must have been like to live in 1st Century Palestine! **Life hung in the balance!** Death was an ever-present reality! Now imagine the deep impact of Jesus' miracles in that sort of world! Jesus' healings were remarkable! **No wonder people flocked to him from everywhere!** However, **Jesus' miracles were NOT just raw demonstrations of power!** Jesus' miracles were sermons-in-action (Visual sermons)! Jesus was reversing the curse of Genesis 3! He was pushing back the kingdom of Satan and of sin!

YOU SEE ... we must remember: Jesus is a preacher who heals – not a healer who preaches! We need to remember that critical distinction & priority in Jesus' person and work! The purpose of his healings was to demonstrate what Jesus was doing at that time. Announcing the KOG! Announcing that people could now be transformed NOT from the “Outside In” BUT from the “Inside Out”!

The Syro-Phoenician Woman

- **Was an unclean woman on the ‘outside’!**
- She was a Gentile!
- How then could she possibly keep the laws that Jewish religion demanded of her?
- How could she possibly expect Jesus to heal her daughter?
- **And yet ...** Jesus does!
- **BUT ...** notice that the focus of the story is not the healing of the daughter => that only receives one verse of text!
- **There is no sensationalism!** Apart from Jesus' remarkable dialogue!
- **The focus is on Jesus the preacher** => engaging the woman in dialogue to help her articulate her need for a Saviour! Only then does Jesus heal. The healing reflecting the power of Jesus over sin and death.

The Deaf Man

- Is another example for us.
- He was an unclean man – on the ‘outside’.
- For how could a deaf man possibly keep the law?
- Once again, Jesus demonstrates his power over sin's realm in a miracle that serves as a wider illustration for us.
- That is, if the disciples of Jesus' are to understand Jesus, then Jesus himself must open their ears to hear!
- No sensationalism! Just a clear visual sermon!

CONCLUSION

Jesus was the preacher who healed. In word and action, announcing the KOG!

And yet to say that Jesus was the preacher who healed – whilst true – is painfully inadequate.

There have been many messengers from God who announced the coming KOG over the years => like the prophets of the OT. And surely the healings of Jesus pointed to something far more satisfying than physical restoration in this life!

Jesus is the King who saves!

Not merely a preacher, but a preacher who himself embodied the message of the Kingdom! **He is the Christ, the Son of God!**

And not merely a healer, either. **But a Saviour!** Whose healings not simply demonstrated compassion for the weak, **BUT** displayed his divine power over sin and death! Finally seen as the cross! **[Mark 10:45]**