

Medical science is really quite amazing. Take my wife, for example. My wife has chronic iritis. A condition where the muscles in the irises of her eyes become inflamed for no reason. It has virtually no external symptoms, other than excruciating pain.

Her doctors only know she has iritis because of some incredible devices that let them see into her eye, and that let them take pictures of her iris and retina. And by blood tests that measure the levels of a particular protein on the surface of her white blood cells. And by giving her drugs that inhibit her body's ability to cause inflammation.

Just a century ago, all of that would have been science fiction. You could not take a photograph of the back of someone's eye. You could not test their blood for proteins. You could not give them drugs to reduce inflammation. If someone had iritis, they simply suffered in agony until, eventually, glaucoma developed in that eye and they went completely blind. But remained, probably, in tremendous pain for the rest of their lives.

Medical science is amazing. And yet, it's still not perfect. My wife has to go back every 6 months to monitor her condition. She had to endure weeks of pain before they got the inflammation under control the first time. She's still taking the medication for it even now, because there is no cure. And even that medication doesn't prevent every single flare-up from occurring.

You see, that's still the problem with medical science. It's amazing and wonderful and sometimes it seems even miraculous. But often, it's only half an answer. It's only half a solution. Often, it's only a treatment. Not a cure. But it's the best we have.

I was struck by this fact as I was reading our Gospel lesson for today. Our lesson is actually the direct continuation of our lesson from last week. Where we hear about Jesus teaching in the synagogue.

And while he's there, a man possessed by an unclean spirit – by a demon – runs in and makes a scene. Because this demon knows who Jesus is: the Holy One of God. Jesus orders the demon to be silent and then casts the demon out.

The people are amazed by Jesus' authority. He becomes instantly famous. It's all anybody can talk about. Which means that no one is actually listening to his preaching anymore. They're just waiting for another miracle. So Jesus decides to leave the synagogue and goes the home of his disciple, Peter.

It turns out that Peter is married and his mother-in-law is staying at his house because she is very, very sick. We don't know what she had. Only that it caused her to have a high fever. It might have been a simple infection that could have been cleared up by a round of antibiotics. But back then, it was deadly.

So they tell Jesus about her and he goes to her room to see her. He takes her by the hand, lifts her up, and the fever is gone. Not only that, but Peter's mother-in-law is back to perfect health. She has regained every ounce of her strength. Such that she gets up and begins serving dinner to Jesus and the disciples.

And this is only the first of several healings in the area. In the verses that follow, Jesus comes upon a man with leprosy who asks Jesus to heal him. Jesus reaches out, touches the man, and says, "Be clean." And the leprosy is gone. Such that the priests can find no evidence that he was ever sick.

A few days after that, we hear about a man who's paralyzed and wants Jesus to heal him. But Jesus is inside a crowded house. The man can't get to him. So he has his friends cut a hole in the roof. Lower him down in front of Jesus. And after forgiving the man's sins, Jesus says, "Rise, pick up your mat, and go home." And the man stands up, picks up his mat, and goes home.

On and on it goes. Jesus heals so many people. But here's the thing: every single time, it's a complete healing. A man was possessed. And then he's not. A woman is deathly ill with a fever. And then she's completely healthy. A man has an incurable disease. And then it vanishes. A man is paralyzed. And then he gets up and walks.

Jesus has no concept of half answers or half solutions. He doesn't deal in treatments. He deals in cures. He deals in more than cures. He deals in full and complete restoration. One second you are sick and deformed and broken, and the next, you're healthy and clean and whole. And there was never any recovery time or medical treatments or drugs to take. It just happens.

And that's important for us to realize. There's a lesson for us in Jesus' healing. Because Jesus doesn't heal for the sake of healing. I mean, yes, Jesus cares about people. Yes, Jesus wants to see suffering end. He wants to see this world the way that he created it to be. Everywhere Jesus goes, a little bit of paradise comes with him. Evil and pain and suffering are simply cast out by his very presence.

But there's something more here, too. Because Jesus himself says, *“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came.”* Jesus didn't come to heal and drive out demons. He came to preach. So why does he spend so much time healing and driving out demons? Well, because in doing so he's actually preaching to us at the same time.

He's preaching to us the good news that he has come to heal us. And that the physical healing that he gave to all those men and women of Galilee he gives to us spiritually today.

That we who are oppressed by evil have found relief from Satan's attack. That we who are sick in soul are made healthy and alive. That we who look in the mirror and see ourselves diseased and deformed by guilt and shame are made clean. That we who feel handicapped by doubt and temptation may now walk in newness of life.

The great doctor of our souls has come. And he does not just bring a treatment. A half answer. A half solution. He doesn't just come to alleviate our symptoms. He comes with a cure and with wholeness. He comes with complete, perfect restoration.

And it is instantaneous. There is no slow process of healing with this cure. It's not like the medical science of this age. It's a miracle of God's grace.

Which can be hard for us to accept. Because, I think, we expect it to be more difficult. We expect that there's going to be some long grueling process. By which we claw our way out of sin and death. Some long, painful treatment for the illness of our soul.

And when we look at it that way, it gives us an opportunity to say, “Well, God healed me, but I did most of the work. God healed me, but I was the one who repented. I read my Bible. I went to church. I said my prayers. I was good to my neighbor.” And we forget that the suffering that we're so proud of was actually done by Jesus on the cross. There is nothing more we can do.

Jesus' healing doesn't leave room for us. It doesn't leave room for our own pride and self-righteousness. We have been given new life. We are living it right now. Healthy and clean and whole.

Like Naaman in the Old Testament, we go into the waters of Holy Baptism covered in disease. And we come out with skin like a newborn infant's. Like David says in Psalm 51, God washes us and we are clean. White as snow.

We go into the waters sick and weak. And we come out healthy and strong. We go into the waters dirty and unclean. And we come out holy and righteous. We go into the waters dead in our sin. And we come out alive in Christ.

It's a healing transformation that the disciples got to see in Jesus' ministry day after day. But it's a healing transformation that we will one day see visibly as well. Because we are waiting for the day when that restoration is physical, as well as spiritual.

When the sickness and injury and oppression and death that plagues us is banished from this entire world. When Christ descends on the clouds in glory and every evil and sinful thing is cast out in his presence. When this whole fallen world is remade, like a newborn infant. And everyone and everything is health, strong, clean, and alive in him who died and rose again.

So come. Let us follow Jesus. To every town and village. To every people and nation. Let us preach the good news of how he has healed us. By the word of his grace and the touch of his Spirit. So that many may hear and believe and live. Amen.