

We've all been there. You're at work one day and you feel that scratchiness in the back of your throat. You're going to bed one evening and you cough as you lay down. You're going about your day and you sneeze for no good reason and it leaves a burning sensation in your sinuses. And suddenly, instinctively, in a single moment, you just know: you're getting sick.

And it is so ridiculously frustrating. Because there's nothing you can do about it. Oh, we try to convince ourselves that we can take vitamin C or zinc or honey or some other home remedy that will stave off the inevitable. But the chances of success are pretty slim. No, most of the time, you just have to suffer through a week or two of misery.

But what is really frustrating is what happens next. Because, as an adult, you don't just get sick and then immediately get better. Kids do that. Kids can be completely laid up in bed one day and then bouncing off the walls the next, like nothing happened. But adults? No.

It's going to be another month, maybe two, before we feel normal again. Before that cough finally goes away completely. Before we finally feel like we don't need 12 hours of sleep. Getting sick happens so quickly. But getting better? That takes forever.

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. And he wants to create trouble for Jesus. But instead, 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 to the home of his disciple, Peter.

It turns out that Peter is married, or perhaps was at one time 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. Imagine that. One moment, you're in bed with a high fever. The next, you're complete well. Faster than a child gets over a head cold.

That's what she experiences. 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.

He was paralyzed from the waist down. His legs hadn't been used in years, most likely... if ever! But at Jesus' word, he can get up and walk, without even a limp.

On and on it goes. Jesus heals so many people. And 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 he's cured. 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. In fact, 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 paralyzed 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 doesn't take days or months or years to get better. 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 recovery 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 those baptismal waters sick and weak. And we come out healthy and strong. We go into those baptismal waters dirty and unclean. And we come out holy and righteous. We go into those baptismal 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 to make us whole. Amen.