

UNEDITED DRAFT

Restoration for Body and Soul

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Some of the most comforting words in Scripture are found in Psalm 23. **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.”** We need that restoration, don’t we? What challenges are you facing in life right now? What obstacles are getting in the way? What stresses are you dealing with? What is causing you to feel worn out and just spent? Is it something physical that has you tapped out? Maybe it’s a heavy burden or responsibility? Maybe it’s guilt. Maybe some kind of fear. Let’s receive comfort today from the story before us in Mark 1:29-39. Let’s just jump right in:

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon’s mother-in-law [Peter was married!] was in bed with a fever [She apparently had an infection of some kind since fever is the only symptom that is mentioned. Today an infection is usually treatable with antibiotics. But those were the days before antibiotics existed. An infection that’s easily curable today could be deadly back then], and they told Jesus about her. [When there is a problem, they know where to turn: Jesus. Why would they tell him? They already knew something about him: 1) He loves people. 2) He can heal people.] 31 So he went to her, took her hand [note his loving touch. Jesus was not a germaphobe. He touched lepers. He touched the sick. Jesus was not afraid of catching what other people had. He was concerned that proper love and care be shown to the suffering.] and helped her up. [We’re not told of a single word uttered. However, parallel accounts tell us he “rebuked” or commanded the fever. One emphasizes the loving touch. The other emphasizes the authority of his word. **The fever left [departed] her and she began to wait on them. [See how this was an immediate and total healing! If you’ve ever been really sick with a high fever, even once the fever breaks, you are tired and you need some time to fully recover. Peter’s mother-in-law doesn’t slowly get up, looking pale... makes her way over to the table and sits down slumped over and tired... gets served some chicken noodle soup... musters a weak smile and says, “I’m feeling so much better.” No, she’s up and immediately starts *making* the soup. In addition to the normal hungry people in her household, there were four hungry fishermen and Jesus. That’s at the very least – assuming no one from the synagogue followed them to Peter’s house. She’s immediately setting about the duties of having guests in the house. Her healing is immediate and it is complete. When Jesus healed, he didn’t start a healing process. He gave complete and total healing.]**

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Jesus is the talk of the town. I mentioned last week that archaeologists estimate Capernaum to be a town of 1,000 – 1,500 at this time. News spreads fast in a small town! After sunset, every sick person in town is at the doorstep of the home of Simon and Andrew. Why after sunset? Why

didn't they come earlier? Well, you'll remember that this was the Sabbath Day. Jesus had been in the synagogue just that morning. That's what we talked about last week when the people were amazed at his teaching because he taught with such authority. Then with that same authority he cast a demon out of a man. Well, the Jewish Sabbath day was a day of rest. People weren't allowed to travel. That was considered work. The Jewish day was reckoned differently than ours. We go from midnight to midnight. Our new day technically starts at 12am. Which, if you think about it is a bit arbitrary. Why would a new day start at night and in the middle of a typical sleep cycle? Anyway, the Jewish days were reckoned from sunset to sunset. When the sun went down, they considered the day to be done, and a new day to have begun. So the Sabbath day ended at sunset... and that's when the people could travel and go see Jesus.

So all the sick in town line up to see him. And it says, **“Jesus healed many who had various deals. He also drove out many demons.”** Some wrongly understand this to mean that of all the sick, Jesus healed many, but not all. Of all the demon possessed, he drove out many, not all. That's not what it's saying. What it is saying is that the sick people lined up, and the number he helped were many, not few. Mark doesn't want us to think that the whole town showed up at the door, and there were only three sick people in the bunch, and those 3... just a few... were healed. No! Of that large crowd, there were *many* sick and demon possessed. And Jesus healed the many.

Jesus' concern for and power over the effects of sin... for the body. Historically, some have mistakenly thought the body / the flesh is evil

As our story continues, we almost see a tension arising in Jesus. Healing and casting out demons was good. It was benefiting people. It showed his great love and power. But this wasn't the main purpose of the Son of God taking on human flesh and coming into our world. He came to give a bigger restoration than this. He came to do something so much bigger and so much more important.

So in what follows, we see Jesus redirecting the course of his ministry. Events were unfolding that had the potential of sidetracking his true mission. So what does Jesus do? Listen:

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” 38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

So we're told that Jesus got up very early in the morning. I imagine the house is quiet and dark. Everyone is still asleep. Jesus very quietly gets up so as not to wake others. Jesus went and found a solitary place to be alone and pray. This is not an occasional practice for Jesus. Luke 5:16 says, **“Jesus himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.”** Jesus needed alone time with his heavenly Father. He constantly needed that spiritual rest and alignment. After healing “many” people, Jesus needed to be alone with his Father. When Jesus spent all day with thousands of people, teaching them, then feeding him... he needed to go by himself on a mountain and pray. When the crucifixion was immanent, when the burden of what was ahead weighed heaviest, what

did Jesus do? What was he doing moments before his accusers came to arrest him? He was in the Garden of Gethsemane praying.

When things got busiest and most stressful, at the times it was most likely for him to get sidetracked from the Father's mission, what would Jesus do? That's when Jesus would take time to be one-on-one with the Father in prayer.

What else was the priority for Jesus? When everyone was looking for him, it was for the wrong reasons. They wanted more miracles, more healings. But Jesus says, "**Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.**" The reason Jesus came was to not to make the physically sick better, but to give eternal life to the spiritual sick. And that would happen as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God. It is this preaching of the Word that is just as important today. For in that word, God confronts us with our sins. He shows us how horrible and awful they are. We are people who, like those of Jesus' day, are looking for healing and comfort in this sinful, decaying, broken world. We fail to look for the true healing God promises in the future, in heaven, to all who believe. Through preaching, God confronts us, and leads us to repent. He turns us to himself and declares the good news. In Christ you are forgiven! His perfectly aligned life that was always on track, God credits to you. Your misaligned, off track life is given to Jesus. He dies for your sins on the cross. He declares you are washed clean through his resurrection from the dead. This is the preaching we need to hear regularly!

Does your devotional life mirror Jesus'? Or does don't we tend to do the opposite? If things aren't too busy, if we have time to spare, then you go to church. Then you take time for prayer. But when life gets especially hectic and stressful, or when we have so much to do we can't imagine how we're going to get it done in the time allotted, isn't that when prayer and meditation on God's Word goes by the way side? Nobody has time for that.

Friends, what we're learning today is that God through his Son Jesus Christ gives restoration to your body and soul. I would suggest to you that it is exactly at those time when you are most busy, most stressed... those times when you're pulled in 10 different directions and you don't even have time for a reasonable night's sleep... those are exactly the times when you need to be blocking out time with the Lord in prayer. That's when you need to be reading his Word and taking it to heart.

Martin Luther is quoted as saying: "I have so much to do that if I didn't spend at least three hours a day in prayer I would never get it all done."

Our help comes from the Lord. We request his help in prayer. He assures us, comforts us, promises us, forgives us, motivates us and empowers us through his Word. This is our nourishment. This is what keeps us alive. This is what energizes us!

ILLUSTRATION: If you're going on a trip and you really need your cell phone to last all day, and you know you'll be using it almost constantly, perhaps a good idea would be to fully charge it at the beginning, and then take advantage of the opportunities along the way to recharge it. If you are particularly stressed, you need to charge up first, then make sure you recharge along the way as well. It is time with the Lord in his Word and in prayer that charge you up.

So my challenge for you is this: Are you currently spending time daily with the Lord? By that I mean quiet, undisturbed time listening to him in his Word and speaking to him in prayer? If you're not, might I suggest that your life is unnecessarily stressful? You are living a life out of alignment with your Creator. I would also suggest that your life is necessarily sidetracked from the

real mission that our Lord has given you. If you are not in a close relationship with him, you must be off track. He wants you to know him, love him and be with him forever. From that he wants a life that overflows with his love as you reciprocate it back to him, and reflect it to others. This does not come to us naturally. We naturally turn inward on ourselves.

CONCLUSION: Friends, we live in a stress-filled world where things just don't work right. Our world and our very selves – body and soul – are corrupted by the curse of sin. We can only be restored through the miraculous power of Christ. And his power fully restores... not just soul but body too. In casting out demons, in healing diseases and in raising the dead, Jesus was giving a glimpse of the full scope of the restoration he came to give.

Jesus' victory is complete. The restoration he set out to give us IS given. In Christ it is yours! You already have it. And you're thinking, "Well, I'm not seeing it, pastor! I'm not feeling it! I don't feel restored at all!" As long as we live in this sinful world, the full glory of what Christ has given remains veiled and hidden. We still get sick. Our loved ones die... and so will we. We still experience guilt and sadness. We still fall into sin. We live in this awkward and often unpleasant time of already having received but not yet getting to fully experience it. But that doesn't make it any less real!

Maybe this will help us understand. Imagine you have a rich uncle. He dies suddenly, and the next day someone calls you and informs you that you are his only remaining heir. You have inherited tens of millions of dollars! There is no mistake. The will is clear. Congratulations! However... there is a delay as the estate must go to probate. A court must determine that the will is valid. The possessions of your uncle must be inventoried. The real estate he owned must be appraised. Taxes must be assessed and paid. Because of the complexity of all of the assets he owns, it's estimated that it will take a year or so for all of this to be settled. So for a whole year, you know that you have inherited an enormous amount of money. But for a year, you must continue to live on your current income. (And imagine you can't borrow!) Although you're conditions really haven't changed, you now have the sure hope that everything will change soon!

This gives us a little picture of where we're at as Christians. Jesus promises he came to rescue and restore you body and soul! He proved that he could do this by giving glimpses of the restoration while he was on earth. He guaranteed he finished his work by his resurrection. But for now you must wait. Maybe a year... maybe 80... but the inheritance is yours. Your soul is redeemed. You are holy in God's sight. Your body is redeemed. It will be raised perfect and glorious. You are an heir of God's kingdom. You are rich! You just aren't able to enjoy it all quite yet!

What gives us hope, courage strength, motivation, enthusiasm, focus, identity, meaning, and purpose while we wait? Preaching and praying. Praying and preaching. For in those two sacred activities, we recall and reaffirm in our hearts and minds the future glory that is set and secure.

Go today in peace, celebrating what you have in Christ Jesus: Restoration for body and soul!
Amen.