



Mercy forever.

# Good Friday Sermon

## The Spirit Anointed Christ for Mercy – Lenten Worship Series

---

*The Spirit Anointed Christ . . . to Proclaim the Jubilee (Good Friday)*

*Based on Luke 4:18–19*

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
Because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release for the captives  
And recovery of sight for the blind,  
To heal the bruised,  
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (a year acceptable to the Lord).

Luke 4:18–19

We have been thinking about these words that Jesus spoke in His hometown synagogue. We have talked about Jesus anointed as Prophet, Priest, and King, to show and to do mercy, and how all of His work is meant to bring a merciful people — His body, the church — into existence.

I have been preaching for a long time and have been a Bible student even longer. I admit in preparing this sermon I found something in the Bible that I have never saw before. I also say this with a profound new understanding of the wealth and the depth in the Word of God. Listen to this passage from Matt. 8:14–17 (NKJV): “<sup>14</sup>Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. <sup>15</sup>So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. <sup>16</sup>When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, <sup>17</sup>that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘*He Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.*’”

Now anyone who reads the Bible or has heard Handle's “Messiah,” has to have a special place in their heart for Is. 53:4, “Surely He has borne our **griefs** and carried our **sorrows.**” What is Matthew doing here, saying He took our **infirmities** and bore our **sicknesses**, and why? I have always looked at this passage as the direct prophecy of what Jesus suffered for us on the cross. Matthew uses His healing as a fulfillment of this prophecy. So, was Jesus actually carrying the sickness in His body when He healed someone? Was this, too, part of His suffering for our sins? Let us meditate on these words tonight saying, “**Jesus, I will ponder now on your holy passion; with your Spirit me endow for such meditation. Grant that I, in love and faith, may the image cherish of your suffering, pain, and death that I may not perish.**”

A literal translation of the Old Testament passage of Isaiah 53, would read: “Surely, he has borne our pains and carried our afflictions.” The Hebrew terms *pains* and *afflictions* can mean suffering resulting from disease, or in a wide sense, the physical and emotional problems that come from calamities. In view of the total context of Isaiah 53, this passage is normally interpreted in the broader sense — the suffering Servant is bearing the calamitous sorrow of sin. Yet St. Matthew takes the passage in its narrower sense, “He bore

our diseases.” The intention is clearly to point to our physical sicknesses, for the prophecy is fulfilled by Jesus in the healing of St. Peter’s mother-in-law.

In his paper, “Christ the Healer,” Dr. Roland Miller talks about two things that this might mean. The first is that the Healer bore our physical sicknesses, but only in a manner of speaking. He bore them in the sense of bearing them away, penultimately by healing some of the ailing, ultimately by destroying sin itself. The second implication reflects the literal sense of the passage — that the suffering Servant actually bore our sicknesses. In some way, Jesus felt and bore the weight and sorrow of our illness in His ministry, just as He felt and bore the weight and punishment of our sins. The text seems to indicate a real bearing and not a bearing away. To what extent shall we take this possible implication seriously? Healing of any kind, physical or spiritual, is costly. (Who has ever said that it is easy to heal?) Christ the Healer was not a magician. When He takes away sin, He suffers for sin. When He takes away disease, in some way — and I leave with you and your own experience to decide in what way — He suffers that too. He is wounded to heal. He is totally wounded to totally heal. From that suffering, there is no escaping: “They offered him a drink of wine, mixed with gall, which he tasted but would not drink.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the great Lutheran theologians to comment on this passage is R.C.H. Lenski. He writes, “In all this work of healing Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies recorded regarding him as the Messiah: in order that it might be fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah, the prophet, saying, He himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” Matthew himself translates Is. 53:4 with exactness: “Jesus ‘took’ and ‘bore’ (*sabal*, βασταζειν, carried as a load) all the ailments that came upon men as the result of sin. The thought is not merely that He took hold of these ailments and rid the sufferers of them. Is. 53:4–7 describes the Messiah as our substitute. Loaded down with our terrible burden, He appears as the suffering and dying Messiah. From this grand prophetic portrait Matthew quotes one line, which he regards as a part of the whole. He sees Jesus in his entire ministry as our substitute, as the burden-bearer who loaded on himself all our sins and all their penalties. At the close of that ministry, by the atoning death, the whole load would be born away. But throughout the course of that ministry Jesus took up and treated men’s sins and the terrible ravages of these sins as his own. By means of all his preaching and teaching, He was freeing men from the grip of their sins; and by means of His constant healings, He was freeing them also from the disease and the pains brought on them through sin.

Like the prophet, Matthew does not separate the two. Only He would die for our sin on the cross and work an eternal redemption from sin. Only He could work a ministry of healing from disease. “It is an untenable, mechanical view to think of a transfer of these diseases to the body of Jesus. The old Jewish view even imagined the Messiah would be a leper. Just as the sins Jesus expiated (paid for) did not become sins that he had himself committed, for he was and had to be holy and sinless in order to be our expiation, so the diseases did not become the diseases of his own body, which was and had to be untainted by any results of sin in order to be fit for his vicarious work.”<sup>2</sup>

These are big words. This is what he means: Our merciful Christ, anointed for mercy, did not become physically sick with the diseases He healed, as if He took them on Himself to suffer from them, because as

1 Roland E. Miller, “Christ the Healer”, paper presented at a symposium in Madison, WI in 1980 and published by the Wheat Ridge Foundation, 1980, 36–37.

2 R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on Matthew’s Gospel*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1943), 336–337.

our anointed High Priest, He had to be a “lamb without spot or blemish.”

So what does this mean? I like what Miller said: “Christ the Healer was not a magician. When He takes away sin, He suffers for sin. When He takes away disease, in some way — and I leave with you and your own experience to decide in what way — He suffers that too.”<sup>3</sup> Matthew Harrison of LCMS World Relief and Human Care talks about the Greek word for Jesus’ compassion, “splakna,” a word that means the “bowels.” Jesus’ reaction to the poor, the blind, the captive, the bruised, the leper, and the lame was visceral. He felt it in His gut and because He felt for them He acted in mercy.<sup>4</sup>

Forgive me but I want to get personal here. I have been a pastor for \_\_\_\_\_ years and in that time I have gone to the hospital, the emergency room, the hospice bed, the jailhouse and the prison, the shut-in’s home, (name the place), more times than I can count. I sat at the bedside of my ailing father on and off for days, and sometimes weeks, during the course of a disease that lasted several years. If you asked me to remember one overriding experience or emotion from all of these experiences, it would a pain in my stomach. I had a pain in my gut from the time I entered those places until I left. I can remember sitting in those places and hearing my own heart beat and being conscious of a heavy breath that never seemed to get enough oxygen. I remember looking at clocks and thinking that the minutes seemed like hours, yet the hours seemed like minutes. Those of you who sit for endless hours at the bedsides of loved ones know what I mean. I remember a deep sense of sorrow that I could never quite understand until I read this text and studied for these Lenten services. That deep sense of sorrow was a mixture of pain, frustration, anger, and sympathy; because at the bottom of all the pain this was the knowledge that this is not the way it is supposed to be. As Prophet, Priest, and King, Jesus knew that to be poor, blind, oppressed, captive, bruised, lame, leprous, homeless, hungry, handicapped, imprisoned, abandoned, orphaned, cancerous, and SINFUL were none of the things God intended for us. However, because of sin it is what we are. It is a feeling of the sheer waste and sadness of what is and what was meant to be. That, I think, is what Jesus felt when He had compassion. That is what He felt when He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and all of the sins, nastiness, filth, and degradation of an entire world of sin is what He felt on the cross. That is what He bore and took away. The awful load He carried cannot be comprehended by us tonight, but we can try and understand. A Christmas song I love has a haunting passage that brings me to this night when I hear it. Singing to the child in the manger, Chris Rice sings, “Fragile finger sent to heal us. Tender brow prepared for thorn. Tiny heart whose blood will save us, unto us is born. So wrap our injured flesh around You. Breathe our air and walk our sod. Rob our sin and make us holy perfect Son of God.”<sup>5</sup>

**He not only carried the load of the sin burden, but the load of compassion and mercy on that cross.**

Look at His words:

“Father forgive them they don’t know what they are doing.” The old Hymn gets it just right.  
 “Jesus in Thy dying woes, even while Thy life blood flows, craving pardon for Thy foes; Hear us,  
 holy Jesus.”

3 Miller, op cit.

4 Matthew C. Harrison, *Christ Have Mercy* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2008), 39–47.

5 Chris Rice “Welcome to our World” Copyright © 2009 ChristianLyricsOnline.com

“Today you will be with me in Paradise,” said Jesus to a thief, pitying his sighs.

“Of the thief, who near you dies, Promising him paradise: Hear us, holy Jesus,” says the hymn.

“Women behold your son, son behold your Mother.” And the hymn, “Jesus, loving to the end Her whose heart your sorrows rend, And your dearest human friend: Hear us, holy Jesus.”

“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” and the hymn, “Jesus, whelmed in fears unknown, With our evil left alone, While no light from heaven is shown: Hear us, holy Jesus.”

“I thirst,” and the hymn, “Jesus, in your thirst and pain, While your wounds your lifeblood drain, Thirsting more our love to gain: Hear us, holy Jesus.”

“It is finished,” He said. “Jesus, all our ransom paid, All your Father’s will obeyed; By your sufferings perfect made: Hear us, holy Jesus.”

“Father into Your hands I commend my Spirit,” and the hymn, “Jesus, all your labor vast, All your woe and conflict past, Yielding up your soul at last: Hear us, holy Jesus.”

Look at the verbs. He craves our pardon; He pities; He loves; He is whelmed; He thirsts; He obeyed. And, He wants to supply us with His grace so that we crave forgiveness for others and pity the lost, suffering, sorrowing. He wants us to love all people, He does not want us to be whelmed over by the magnitude of the suffering we see around us, but be whelmed by His power and mercy. He wants us to thirst for the downtrodden to be lifted up, and He wants us to obey the perfect will of God.

And the last verse from that hymn, “May your life and death supply Grace to live and grace to die, Grace to reach the home on high: Hear us, holy Jesus.” His grace is sufficient to accomplish those things. They are dispensed to us in the church. Through the sacrament of Baptism we can live a merciful life; in the Lord’s Supper we get Christ in His whole so we can give ourselves to our neighbors of our whole. In absolution we are free to speak mercifully, we have the means to accomplish all these things for the one who did so much for us.

We will never comprehend all that Christ, our anointed one, carried, bore, and suffered. What we can comprehend is why He did it. The words of Luther: “Our Lord and Savior Jesus has left us a commandment which applies equally to all Christians, namely, that we are to render . . . the works of mercy [Luke 6:36], to those who are afflicted and in a state of calamity, and that we are to visit the sick, try to free the captives, and do similar things for our neighbor so that the evils of the present may be somewhat lessened. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself gave us the brightest example of this commandment when . . . he descended from the bosom of the Father into our misery and our prison, that is, into our flesh and our most wretched life, and took upon Himself the penalty for our sins so that we might be saved.”

May the merciful Christ, anointed for mercy, strengthen you this night and always so that you may live lives of mercy as a member of His body, until the day comes when all is mercy.

Amen.