

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

February 4, 2024

QUESNEL

“The Jesus Vaccine” (Mark 1:29-39)

Have you gotten the latest vaccine yet?

- That is the ongoing “viral” question that is being asked
 - (yes, pun intended).
- Have you gotten the vaccine?
 - It is not as much talked about today,
 - because it seems that we are past
 - the biggest need to be protected.
- But the offer is still there for the ongoing
 - various vaccinations
 - and other shots,
 - as the case may be.
- As you well know by now
 - there are a couple of different vaccines available.
 - One posts a 94.1% efficacy rate
 - and the other major vaccine
 - is showing an efficacy rate
 - of more than 90%.

But, my friends,

- those results are not nearly good enough.
 - Because that still means that anywhere from six to ten percent
 - of people who get the shot
 - get the virus anyway.
- And if the virus does not get you,
 - most certainly something else will.
 - So far, I have not heard of any vaccine
 - that can prevent you from succumbing
 - everything that could cause you to die.
- As a famous surgeon general in the US once ironically said,
 - “We all will probably die of something
 - sooner or later.”

Well, actually, let us take a look at that.

- I do know of something that can
 - and will prevent you from dying.
- And I am here today
 - to tell you about it.
 - Let us call it “The Jesus Vaccine” for the moment.
 - The Jesus vaccine.
 - It is not 90% effective.
 - It is not 94.1% effective.
 - No, the Jesus vaccine is 100% effective,
 - and against all causes of death,
 - viruses included.

The Jesus vaccine.

- Now first let me tell you what I **do not** mean by that.
 - When I was thinking about this the other day,
 - I googled the words “Jesus” and “vaccine.”
 - What I discovered was that there were certain people
 - who are still protesting the Covid vaccine,
 - saying that they do not need it,
 - because, as their signs said,
 - “Jesus is my vaccine.”
- Now that is taking it too far.
 - I am not saying that everybody has to get the vaccine.
 - I am not saying that it is wrong
 - to have some hesitancy or reluctance to get it.
 - I understand that.

But these protesters are saying,

- “Jesus is my vaccine”
 - It is like they are suggesting
 - that just because they are Christians,
 - they are not going to get the virus.
 - And that is wrong.
- Being a Christian
 - does not make you immune from earthly disease.
 - In fact,
 - I know of a number of Christians,
 - and have even heard of fellow classmate pastors,
 - who have died from the Coronavirus.

- Jesus did not prevent them
 - from getting the virus
 - and dying from it.
 - It is not that they did not have enough faith.
 - They did have faith.
- But they are human,
 - and humans get diseases and die.
 - That is a fact.

So how can I say that “the Jesus vaccine”

- is 100% effective
 - and will keep you from dying?
- You know how.
 - Because Jesus has the desire to heal you
 - from disease and death,
 - and He has the power to do it.
- We see that in our text today from Mark chapter 1.
 - *“Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever,*
 - *and immediately they told Him about her.*
 - *And He came and took her by the hand*
 - *and lifted her up,*
 - *and the fever left her.”*
- Or later that day:
 - *“That evening at sundown*
 - *they brought to Him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.*
 - *And the whole city was gathered together at the door.*
 - *And He healed many who were sick with various diseases.”*
- So, Jesus certainly has the desire
 - to heal
 - and the power to do it.

?Then how come

- not all people who would like Jesus to heal them
 - get healed?
- Well, not all people back then
 - got healed either.
 - There were plenty of Israelites
 - back in Jesus’ time
 - who did not get healed.

- Maybe they had no one
 - to bring them to the door
 - where Jesus was doing His thing.
- Maybe they were living in a town
 - that Jesus did not get around to visiting.
 - Or maybe, like Simon's mother-in-law,
 - who got healed of a fever that day,
 - later on she certainly died of something else.
 - The point being,
 - all those people that Jesus healed
 - still ended up dying.

So why did Jesus do those healings, then,

- if they were not going to last?
 - What Jesus was doing
 - was demonstrating **the final** outcome
 - of the mission He came to accomplish.
 - The journey Jesus was taking,
 - the ministry He was carrying out,
 - will result in the perfect healing
 - of both body and soul.
- These physical healings were an advance installment of the final fulfillment.
 - They were a sneak preview, of sorts,
 - a foretaste of the feast to come
 - of what is to come.
 - Therefore,
 - Jesus did not have to heal every single person
 - was sick at the time.
- Nor does He need to do a miraculous healing
 - for every Christian who is sick today.
 - Jesus has done enough healings, though,
 - the ones we already have recorded for us in the Bible,
 - to show that this is what is in store in for all of us
 - who trust in Him.
- Jesus came to announce
 - and usher in the kingdom of heaven,
 - and in this kingdom
 - there will be complete and total healing,
 - in body and soul,
 - for all believers.

Disease and death,

- physical maladies,
 - sickness and sorrow–
 - these are the true alien intruders
 - in the paradise that God created.
- These ailments and illnesses are the result of our sin,
 - humanity's rebellion against our Creator.
 - They are part of the curse
 - that we brought upon ourselves
 - for disobeying God's command.
 - You realize of course
 - Man was not meant to die.
- But all of creation
 - including our bodies–
 - has been damaged by our fall into sin.

This is why we get sick and die.

- Because of our sin.
 - Oh, not that this specific sickness
 - is directly the result of that particular sin.
 - But just generally,
 - we get sick and die
 - because we are sinners,
 - living in a fallen world.

And if Christ had not come,

- if we were just left to our own devices,
 - we would have died eternally.
 - And that is the Big Death.
 - To perish eternally under God's condemnation and judgment,
 - to suffer God's wrath and punishment
 - that is what you and I
 - and all of humanity
 - were headed for.
- And justifiably so.
 - For you and I and all of humanity
 - have sinned against God.
 - We have broken His commandments,
 - repeatedly.

- And what we have earned by our sins is death.
 - Death with a capital “D.”

But Jesus came to remedy that.

- He came to get to the root of the problem.
 - We could not rescue ourselves.
 - Only Christ could.
 - Only Christ Jesus,
 - the very Son of God come in the flesh,
 - could do that big job.
 - And He has.

What was needed was a man

- who would keep God’s commandments.
 - Jesus got that right.
 - What was needed was a man
 - who would take the punishment for our sin.
 - Jesus did that by dying on the cross.
- And because He is God’s own Son,
 - what Jesus did is big enough to cover all sinners.
 - His righteousness gets placed in our account.
 - Our sins are cleansed by His holy blood.
 - By His holy wounds, we are healed.
 - By His resurrection,
 - we are assured
 - that we too will rise from the dead.

This is why I can say

- that Jesus will keep you from dying eternally.
 - Because the Big Death
 - has already been taken care of.
 - Only the small death remains.
 - This is why Jesus could say:
- *“I am the resurrection and the life.*
 - *Whoever believes in me,*
 - *though he die, yet shall he live,*
 - *and everyone who lives and believes in me*
 - *shall never die.”*

So, unless Jesus comes back first,

- you and I will die.
 - It may not be a virus,
 - but something will cause us to breathe our last.
 - But that death will not be the big one.
 - You and I who trust in Christ
 - will never die that death.
 - That Big death was buried in our Baptism.
 - Instead, we will enjoy everlasting life.
- That death is called sleep
 - by Jesus Himself
 - something less than total death.

The fact that Jesus came to heal our bodies

- and not just our souls
 - is promised to us in the sacraments.
 - The sacraments are God's way of telling us
 - that He has redeemed our physical bodies.
 - The sacraments apply God's healing mercy
 - to our mortal bodies.

Luther writes of this in the Large Catechism.

- About the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, he says:
 - 'I am baptized.
 - And if I am baptized,
 - it is promised to me
 - that I shall be saved
 - and have eternal life,
 - both in soul and body.'
- For that is the reason
 - why these two things are done in Baptism:
- the body
 - which can grasp nothing but the water
 - is sprinkled and, -----
 - in addition,
 - the Word is spoken
 - for the soul
 - which can grasp the Word
 - but not grasp the water.

- Thuse the Word and the water are tied together.
 - Now, since both, the water and the Word,
 - make one Baptism,
 - therefore, body and soul
 - must be saved and together they live forever.”

Likewise,

- Luther writes about the bodily benefit
 - of the Sacrament of the Altar.
 - He says:
 - “It will cure you
 - and give you life both in soul and in body.
 - For where the soul has recovered,
 - the body also is relieved.”
- Friends, ----- today,
 - you come up to this altar,
 - you will be taking into your body
 - the life-giving body and blood of your Saviour.
- This is why the early church father St. Ignatius
 - could call the Lord’s Supper
 - “the medicine of immortality,”
 - the antidote against dying,
 - “that we should live forever in Christ Jesus.”

This is why today I am calling this sacrament

- “the Jesus vaccine.”
 - When, in fact, the whole gospel is.
 - Our Lord Jesus Christ is the great Physician
 - of body and soul.
- Take the Jesus vaccine,
 - the gospel medicine,
 - and no virus,
 - no disease,
 - no death
 - will be able to shut you out from eternal life.
- Have you gotten the vaccine?
 - The Jesus vaccine, I mean.
 - With this one,
 - the efficacy rate is 100%.

AMEN

This sermon was prepared for the Divine Service at Trinity Lutheran Church, Quesnel, BC and was presented on February 4, 2024, the day we celebrated the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany. If you have questions or comments please feel free to call or text Pastor Alan Visser at (250) 552-4685.