

Works and Witness

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There's this old Frank Sinatra song most of you've probably heard. It's called "Love and Marriage." And in the song, there's this humorous refrain.

*Love and marriage, love and marriage / They go together like a horse and carriage / This I tell you brother / You can't have one without the other.*¹

Yet, people fall in love all the time but frequently choose not to get married. In fact, marriage rates in the United States have been in decline since the mid-1980s.² And, we all know people who complain that their marriages are dead and loveless, nevertheless they persevere in them. So, perhaps what Sinatra should have crooned, instead of "you *can't* have one without the other" is that "you *shouldn't* have one without the other." In short, they're designed to go together.

In today's passage, we're going to consider another two things which the Lord intends for his followers to keep united. And, we're going to see that that's precisely what Jesus does in his ministry. Let's read and see what these two things are.

Luke 4:38-44

³⁸ Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

⁴⁰ At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. ⁴¹ Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

⁴² At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the

¹ You can listen to Sinatra sing the song [here](#).

² See [this](#) government study on marriage for more details.

other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”⁴⁴ And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

In today’s passage, Jesus continues to bring good news into the lives of people who are hurting and oppressed. We saw it last week, and we see it again this week. We see that (1st) **Jesus works** for the gospel. However, this isn’t Jesus’ only priority. He didn’t merely come to heal people and cast-out demons. He also came to preach. So, we see that (2nd) **Jesus witnesses** about the gospel. He insists these go together. You can’t have one without the other.

Let’s look and see what we can learn about this from Jesus.

1. **Jesus works.**

Last week we saw Jesus’ confrontation with a demon. He casts out the demon from an oppressed man in Capernaum. It’s his first miracle in Luke’s gospel account and signals the very character of Jesus’ mission. He’s come to separate us from evil *before* the day of judgment. He’s come to save us from the wrath of God against sin. This is the best kind of good news.

Do you remember the demon’s question? Have you come to destroy us, Jesus? Do you remember Luke’s description of the exorcism, that the man was *not* injured? Jesus *hasn’t* come to destroy us but to deliver us. He’s the Savior. Amen!

Well, if that miracle was a signpost pointing forward to the good news mission which Jesus had come to accomplish, then this week we see those gospel floodgates thrown wide open. Here Jesus casts out more demons. Here Jesus heals more people. Here he unleashes his authority for good news purposes. People flock to see him—carrying their friends and neighbors who need help because Jesus is their only hope. And friends, Jesus does not disappoint them.

It all starts simply enough. They travel from the synagogue to Simon’s home. This is Simon Peter who will soon become Jesus’ disciple. And, when they go inside, we’re told that Peter’s mother-in-law has a high fever and, thus, everyone asks Jesus to help her. So, he does. He rebukes the fever, and the fever immediately dissipates. Peter’s mother-in-law is healed. In fact, Luke tells us that she’s so well, so healed,

that she jumps to her feet and starts hosting everyone. She vigorously serves them with eagerness and energy.

Now, it would be easy to misread this text. If you're like me, you may think—"Come on! Give her a break!" However, that kind of thinking totally misses the point of this scene. Peter's mother-in-law isn't a *minion* here but our *model*.

There's an interesting scene later in Luke where Jesus encounters ten lepers, while he's traveling up to Jerusalem, who all ask him to heal them (Luke 17:11-19). So, he does. Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priest because priests were able to declare someone healed officially and, thus, allow the person to enter back into normal community life. So, the ten lepers run-off and present themselves to the priest who confirms that they are indeed healed. Yet, that's the last Jesus hears from nine out of the ten healed lepers. Only one healed leper returns with this report. Only one healed leper returns to kneel before Jesus and praise him.

Friends, this is a picture of discipleship. What will an encounter with Jesus do to you? How will meeting with Jesus change you? Will you come-back to serve him, to kneel before him, to praise him as that leper did or as Peter's mother-in-law did? Or, will you simply run back to the world you once knew?

This healed woman is our model of discipleship. When you truly meet Jesus, your heart will be transformed in thankfulness, and you will be pleased to serve God with all that you have—with eagerness and energy. Amen.

Well, by the evening, the word has spread across the region and all the sick and demon oppressed are brought to Jesus. And, even though it's late, he heals them. He doesn't turn them away. He brings good news. Jesus works for gospel purposes. And, consider how Jesus heals them; consider his bedside manner; consider the type of doctor he is. Does Jesus strive for efficiency at the cost of personal connection? Does he tell them to come back at another time—to make an appointment? No sir! Jesus cares for these broken people with intimacy and love.

Look at the text again. Consider what Jesus *could've done* with his authority, and what he *does do* with it.

At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them (v. 40).

Friends, Jesus has just healed Peter's mother-in-law by rebuking a high fever. His words have total authority. They have complete power. So, when these crowds of people come with the sick and demon possessed, Jesus could gather them together and, with a single word, simply heal them. He doesn't need to meet with each one. He doesn't need to breakdown physical barriers. Jesus doesn't have to take his time or exert his energy to meet with each one.

But, Jesus does. And, *it's beautiful!*

Have you ever been cornered by someone who is needy and all you can think about is how to get away? Have you ever been in the middle of a serious conversation and caught yourself checking the time rather than listening to the person before you? Your mind wandering? Your patience tested? Your empathy low? This is a struggle for me, and I'll bet that it's a struggle for you. But, this is *not* how our Lord operates. Jesus sees and hears and cares for all those who are needy and broken and invisible to the rest of the world.

Friends, Jesus works for good news. And, the way he delivers it *is* good news. He loves and cares and relates perfectly. He doesn't just heal and exorcise demons. Jesus does so with intimate compassion.

Praise God for Jesus! Everything about him is gospel!

Well, Jesus doesn't simply perform works. He doesn't simply heal sick people or feed hungry people. He came to do more than that.

2. Jesus witnesses.

The crowds of people, who have encountered Jesus and his good news power in today's text, do something predictable. They ask Jesus to stay. In fact, they attempt to keep him from leaving. They try to make him stay.

Look at what Luke tells us.

At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them (v. 42).

Isn't this too real? It's human nature. The people have seen what Jesus can do. They've seen what he is capable of. They're thinking of the benefits of having him

in the area—no more demon problems, no more bouts with fever, no more disease. Jesus could save them a lot of pain and suffering. I can almost hear the town leaders as they devise their best offers—as they concoct their schemes to entice this healer to stick around. “Capernaum could use a guy like you, Jesus. You’re really talented, and we’re a community that appreciates talent. You’ll be popular and comfortable. We’ll make sure of that. You’ll get everything you need. What do you say, Jesus? Will you stay with us?”

Sometimes we underappreciate the ways in which Jesus stood-up in the face of temptations. We naively think he was merely tempted by Satan in the wilderness. But, friends, Jesus was being tempted to abandon God’s mission throughout his life. In fact, just after Jesus is tempted by the devil in the wilderness for the third time, Luke tells us that Satan “left [Jesus] until an opportune time” (4:13). That’s ominous; isn’t it? The devil is constantly looking for opportunities. And, this is one of them. Staying in Capernaum is one of them. “Don’t you want to live the simple life, Jesus? Capernaum is better than Calvary!”

Satan is so insidious. Yet, Jesus will not be moved. You’d certainly be moved. And, I’d surely be moved. But, not our Lord. Don’t cling to your own power, friends. Cling to Jesus and his power! Trust in his deliverance from temptation! Amen.

So, Jesus doesn’t cave to their pressures. He didn’t come simply to be a doctor. He didn’t come to merely perform miracles. Jesus explains—in no uncertain terms—that he has come to preach and proclaim the good news. And, this gospel message must be kept with his gospel works. You can’t have one without the other.

Look at what he says to the crowds who implore him to stay.

...they tried to keep him from leaving.... But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns...because that is why I was sent.” And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea (vv. 42-44).

You know, friends, there has long been a divide between churches in the West. Some churches have given up preaching the gospel in word. They make the business of the church about feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the poor. They say these things are the gospel. No need to muddy the waters with all that stuff about heaven and hell and trust in Jesus for salvation.

On the other hand, some congregations overreact to this and, thus, steer clear of any emphasis on feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the poor. These churches are all about preaching the gospel. No need to feed and clothe people if their souls are doomed. Let's not get distracted by those things. Let's save them. Let's teach them about Jesus.

Friends, both of these positions are a gross mistake. And, both ignore our Lord and his witness in this passage. Jesus came to do both. He came to work and witness. He came to heal and help as well as preach and proclaim. *And so must we!*

Ed Stetzer, of Wheaton College, makes this clear when he writes the following about gospel proclamation and gospel demonstration. Here's what he says.

If we are going to join Jesus on his mission, we need to be passionate about reaching the lost with the transforming power of the gospel. And if we are going to be like Jesus, compassion must be our motivation to minister to the physical needs of the people we say we love. Most people really do have an attitude of, "I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care." There's no need to choose between proclaiming and demonstrating. Telling people we have a Savior who loves them if we don't actually love them is hardly fair.³

Friends, this church has had a rich history of proclaiming and demonstrating. I'm certain, during its 140-plus years of history, that it has wavered back and forth on this spectrum—at times favoring gospel proclamation over gospel demonstration, at times favoring gospel demonstration over gospel proclamation.

Yet, we aren't called to favor one over another. We are called to be like Jesus. He healed and fed people. Jesus had compassion for them and their physical needs. He worked gospel. Yet, simultaneously, he was preaching about and pointing people to their spiritual needs. He was pointing them towards their need for spiritual rescue. Jesus told them that he was that salvation—"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Have you ever considered what it meant for Jesus to heal someone of a fever? Or, raise someone from the dead? What happens afterwards? They get sick again. They eventually die again. Their problem has simply been put-off for a little while.

³ You can read Stetzer's entire blog post [here](#).

The good news for them is short lived. And, this is why our Lord came both working and witnessing gospel.

Next Sunday we will celebrate the resurrection. Not as a good news metaphor. No! We celebrate the bodily resurrection of Jesus—*his ultimate victory over death!* This is important because it emphasizes the unity and salvation of the whole person. God cares about our physical needs. So, the Lord in Christ will resurrect our bodies. And, God cares about our spirits. So, in Christ, he will renew and purify our souls. Friends, in the wisdom of God, you can't have one without the other. Amen.