

“I’ve Got a Fever and There Is Only One Cure”

Luke 4:31-44

Last Sunday, I had a few minutes before the Voter’s Meeting, so I took a look at the lessons appointed for this week, to get a head start on Monday morning. As many of you know, I like to write my sermons on Monday, and be done with them by Tuesday, because you never know how the week will unfold.

Something in the Jeremiah text caught my attention. The youth of our church are capable of deep and abiding faith. I thought of our confirmation class. I thought about the Baptism we will have in two weeks for Addison Buss. What a perfect text that would have been: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”

Then I looked at the Epistle lesson and heard those words read at my wedding and many other weddings: “Love is patient and kind . . .” Monday night, I am beginning to meet with the couples who are getting married this year, as they join with our new member class for some of the sessions. Reading this text, I was reminded of my own wedding vows – which is something I encourage all of you to review now and then. One of the great parts of being a pastor is that I get to speak my confirmation vows and my wedding vows over and over again. It helps you stay grounded. These vows are strong words.

Then I read about Jesus casting out the demon, as we read in Luke's Gospel. Talk about strong words. The people in Capernaum were amazed at the authority with which Jesus spoke. This man speaks with strong words, not like the "teachers of the Law." I also pondered focusing on the house of Peter's mother-in-law. When we were there, in Capernaum, they have found it. The house had become a church. And you can look down into the rooms and see the actual floor and walls that Jesus and the disciples would have touched.

There was so much to preach on. I made a few notes, and went to the Voter's Meeting.

Sunday night, actually Monday morning about 3:30 AM, I began to feel like Simon Peter's mother-in-law. With her, Jesus came and "rebuked the fever" and it left her. I became violently ill in the wee hours of the morning. I will not describe what happened, but it wasn't pretty. I gave my own rebuke in a way and "told" God that "I am too busy to be sick this week." I really did tell that to God. I mean, I have a lot of things to do. This was my week to get ahead for Lent and Quincy Bible Institute. Instead, I spent all day Monday and most of Tuesday in bed or on the couch.

It is humbling to be helpless. You realize that nothing you do will make you better, and no amount of self-importance will free you from certain illnesses.

This reminded me of our life of sin. Sin is a plague upon mankind. As St. Paul says, "The wages of sin is death." Sin is a sickness that

leads to death. You are born with it. Even though God knew you from before you were formed in the womb, the sin of Adam was with you when you were born – actually when you were conceived, if we want to be specific.

This is why sin must be dealt with. This is why children are baptized. This is why Christ came into this world, so that He could be the One who dealt with our sin. Sin is the worst of all illnesses. It is terminal. It always leads to death. This seemed to be what was happening to Peter's mother-in-law. However, Jesus speaks, rebukes the fever, and it "left" her. The word "to leave" is the same Greek word used we often translate as "to forgive." To be forgiven is to be separated from your sins. Your sins have left you, because Jesus has rebuked them.

And immediately she rose. And yes, this is the same words used at Jesus resurrection. Here in Luke's Gospel, early in His ministry, we get a foreshadowing of a greater event to come. There is a much worse illness than a fever, and there is only one cure . . . the forgiveness of sin followed by the resurrection. Sin is the disease. It must be separated from you. It must be forgiven. This is why we baptize. And what a joy it is to hear those words: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."

Yet, because the sin of Adam makes us, by nature, sinful and unclean, the wages of sin is still death. Sin is not just *a* deadly disease. It is *the* deadly disease. This is why we gather around the broken body and shed blood of Christ our Lord.

Keeping all of our vows, doing our best to do what is right, being the best that we can be will not “rebuke the fever” of sin. Without Christ, we are helpless. The Law of God pointing out the guilt of our sin is very humbling. And no amount of self-importance will triumph over the fever of sin.

From the time you entered your mother’s womb, you have had this “fever,” and there is only One cure. What a joy it is to know that God has said, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”

Your salvation has never been in doubt. The forgiveness of sin – your sin leaving you, being separated from you as far as the East is from the West, as Scripture says, this is the heart of the Gospel. The forgiveness of sin followed by the resurrection – we get a foreshadowing of that in the house of Peter’s mother-in-law. How fitting that a place of forgiveness and the promise of the resurrection would become a church. Nothing has changed. The church is where we still come to receive forgiveness – have our sin be separated from and leave us. It is here that we find the promise of the resurrection.

Sin is the sickness that leads to death. Christ is the cure. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Amen.