

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 was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her.³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

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.

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. (NIV 84)

Theme: Jesus Overcomes with Power

1. He heals sicknesses
2. He casts out demons
3. He spreads his word

We face many hardships in our lives. They come in all shapes and sizes and in many different situations. And the American in us thinks that we can handle our problems on our own. We're independent, we're strong; we can do anything we want to do. We don't need any help from anyone.

But the world—full of sickness, disease, and sinful human beings tries to get us our focus off of Christ. The devil and his fallen angels seek to destroy our faith every day. We are constantly fighting the battle with our sinful flesh and our reason which wants nothing to do with God and his word. Because these hardships are so plentiful and so powerful we can't overcome them on our own.

But today we learn that Christ overcomes with his power. He heals diseases, he casts out demons, and he spreads his Word.

The day that our text took place was most likely one the busiest days in Jesus' life. On this day, Jesus was in Galilee during the early part of his ministry. Large crowds were following him so he decided to walk up a mountain. And there, at the top of the mountain he began to preach. Matthew records this sermon for us in chapters 5-7 of his gospel. His words are known as "The Sermon on the Mount," Jesus' most famous sermon. After he got done preaching he met a man with leprosy. By simply reaching out to touch the man, and saying a few simple words Jesus healed the man of his leprosy. Then he met a centurion whose servant was sick. Jesus healed that servant from a distance by simply saying he was going to do so.

Then Jesus entered Capernaum, a small town in Galilee. On this Sabbath he went into the Synagogue to preach. The people exclaimed that he taught as no other—he taught God's Word with authority. As he left the temple he met a man who was possessed by a demon. When Jesus told the demon to come out of the man, the demon left with a shriek. And then with a large crowd still following him, Jesus went with Peter and a few other disciples to Peter's house. And there many people brought others who had sicknesses, diseases or were possessed by demons.

The people in Galilee certainly had their fair share of problems that they had to suffer through. Like all the people that Jesus met that one Sabbath, we too have problems. And many of those could be sicknesses and diseases. Or some other health issue. The doctor just gave you bad news. You have some rare disease. You are going to have to live in pain the rest of your life. Go through countless medical exams. And go broke, trying to pay all your medical bills, simply to live a little bit longer. And you wonder why God let this happen to you. You have been a Christian your whole life, so why does it seem as if Christ is punishing you?

Or perhaps your loved one just got diagnosed with cancer. Or they suffered a heart attack or stroke or something of the like. Now, you have to see them suffer. And you have to live seeing someone who was once full of life, be lifeless. And you see your other loved ones struggling to take care of those who are suffering physically. And you begin to wonder, why. Why would God allow this to happen? Why am I, or why is my loved one still around? And we are tempted to let

these physical problems keep us away from Christ. “I can’t follow a God who allows someone to suffer. I just don’t think I can praise a God who doesn’t help me. And soon our focus is off of Christ who saved us, and on to our physical problems. And our faith begins to wane.

Inside Peter’s house, Jesus learned that Peter’s Mother-in-law was sick—she didn’t even have the strength to sit up. So he went over to her, lifted her up, grabbed her by the hand, and spoke to her. And the fever went away. Jesus had healed her. Instantly, she was fine. She immediately got up and began to serve them. Normally when we are getting over a fever, it takes time to recover. We often physically tired from the battle that was waging inside of us. But not so with Peter’s Mother-in-law. She had no after effects whatsoever. When Jesus healed her, it was as if she was never sick. Jesus has complete power over physical sicknesses and diseases.

By the end of the day, word had spread about Jesus and we are told that the whole town was at Peter’s door waiting. They all wanted Jesus to heal them and their loved ones and to cast out demons. And Jesus did—every single one of them. And when he did this, they realized who Jesus was—or at least they should have. So their hardships actually served to benefit them. Jesus used their hardships to give them or strengthen their faith. The same thing can be said for us. Christ turns our hardships into blessings. Paul says so in our second lesson. **We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** We see it in our first lesson as well. As much as Job suffered, we know that God was in control the whole time. And when God took away his pain, his faith was strengthened.

God may never take away your physical pain while you are on the earth. But he will make it work out for your benefit and in the end you will be pain free in heaven, for Jesus has power over the devil.

That night, not only did people bring those who had sicknesses and diseases to Jesus, they also brought those who were possessed by demons. We are never told how many demon possessed people were brought to Jesus but it seems as if they were many. And this is the only case that Jesus came across where he dealt with demons. We

already mentioned that earlier in the day Jesus cast a demon out of a man as he was coming out of the temple. And there are many other examples of Jesus’ dealing with demons. Once he sent a legion of demons into a group of pigs. Another time he dealt with a man who was bound by chains living a cave because of the demon that possessed him.

But how many occurrences do we see of demon possession today? Not many. They certainly had many more people who were possessed by demons, than we do today. So we may be tempted to think that demons have absolutely no power at all. That we don’t have to worry about them. We may fall into a false sense of security by thinking that we can handle the devil and his demons on our own. That they pose no treat to us at all.

But that is exactly what Satan wants you to think. He doesn’t want you to worry about him. But he is more powerful than we could ever imagine. We are no match for the devil and his demons Peter tells us that the devil **prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.** He is always looking for a way to destroy us. He is searching for ways to get us away from Christ. And like a little gazelle against a lion, we can’t resist the devil by our own power. The devil certainly does have the power and ability to possess us. Demons can certainly cause us grief in many ways.

And he is not only more powerful than us; he is also smarter than us. He tricked Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Even though they knew God’s will and were without sin; they were still no match for the devil. He has led many people astray. Judas betrayed Jesus. Peter denied him. It doesn’t matter what we are now, it doesn’t matter if we have gone to church our whole lives, we can’t defeat the devil. We can’t resist him on our own. He outwits us in many different ways. For us as Christians, he tries to get us to doubt God’s word. He puts thoughts in our minds that God’s word isn’t true because it doesn’t make sense. Or he gets us to not follow a small part of God’s word because we don’t agree with it, and that small teaching soon changes to a bigger one until we lose our faith completely. Or he gets us to stop reading God’s Word. Or he convinces us that we don’t need to go to church to worship God. And we don’t even notice our faith slipping away.

Sounds scary doesn't it? Don't worry; just as God has power over sickness and disease, he also has power of the devil and his demons. Demons must listen to Jesus. If Jesus told them they had to leave the person they were possessing they had to. If Jesus told them they weren't allowed to speak, they couldn't speak. Even when Satan was wreaking havoc on Job's life, he could only do so much. He could only do as much as God let him. And in the end, instantly God removed every problem that Satan inflicted Job with. Back when the devil rebelled against God, Jesus and his angels defeated him. And he sent them down to hell to suffer forever.

And when the devil tricked Adam and Eve, God gave them a promise of forgiveness. And he told the devil about Jesus, **he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel**. Satan tried to score a blow on Jesus when he tempted him after 40 days and nights in the wilderness, but Satan failed all three times. Satan did strike a blow on Jesus and thought he won when Jesus died. But it was only a bruise on the heel for Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead, and crushed Satan's head. Jesus' death paid for our sins and through his resurrection he has given us his victory over death. Jesus has always had and will always have Satan's number. He can only do what Christ allows him to do. And Jesus will protect us from the devil. He will not let any of his believers fall into the hands of the devil. We have nothing to fear.

The way Jesus protects us from the devil is through the gospel.

After Jesus preached a few different sermons, healed people from their sicknesses and diseases, and cast out demons he was tired. It certainly was the busy day. But early the next day, Jesus woke up. He got up before dawn, while everyone else was still sleeping. He went to a secluded place so he could concentrate and not be distracted by anyone. And he prayed to God. We don't know the content of this prayer, but we can be sure that Jesus prayed for his us. He prayed that the people would listen to him. That they would realize through his miracles that he was sent by God and was God. And that they in turn listen to his words.

But when the sun came up people came to Peter's house to look for Jesus. So Peter and some others went to find him. And when they found him they said to Jesus that everyone was looking for him. But Jesus didn't want to go see everyone. He didn't want to perform any

more miracles. He wanted to preach. He said, **Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.**

Jesus came to preach the gospel. He came to spread God's Word. He didn't come to perform miracles. To heal people from their sicknesses and cast out demons. But his miracles served to call our attention to Christ. They show us that he truly was sent by God. They prove to us that he is God. His miracles were so that the people would listen to him. For his Words are far more important than his miracles. His miracles point out that he has the power of God, and his words tell us that he is God. And Jesus came to tell us about himself. To point out to them that he is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies and laws. He came to point to himself as the one who takes away the sins of the world. And those that followed him because of his miracles also heard him preach the gospel. And they would go on to see Jesus suffer and die on the cross. Only to rise again three days later. And if they listened to Jesus, they would have heard him say that he took away our sins through that death, they will never come back to haunt us. And through his resurrection he promises us that we too will rise again and join him in heaven forever.

Jesus came to preach the Word. And yet there are many times that we fail to listen to the Word or to trust the Word. The devil works in many ways. He doesn't want you to listen to the Word, let alone believe it. So he puts all kinds of excuses into our minds. I have better things to do than to get in the Word today, this week, or this month. He also causes doubt to come up in our minds from time to time. Did God really say? Is this what God really means? Did that actually happen, or is that an embellishment made by man? Does God really expect me to follow this law made for a different time and place?

Because of our doubt, because of our unbelief in certain things, Jesus spreads the gospel. For it is only through the gospel that the Holy Spirit brought us to faith. And through it he keeps us in that one true faith. For our faith becomes stronger through the hearing of the Word. Through it God leads us to overcome our unbelief. Through it our doubts are removed. It was through preaching that Christ defeated the

devil. For it was through the gospel that Christ brought us out of the darkness of unbelief into his wonderful light.

Diseases, sicknesses, the power of the devil, doubt and unbelief—these are all spiritual hardships that we face everyday. And we cannot overcome them on our own. But Christ overcomes with power. For he has the power to use our physical problems in a way that benefits us. He has power over Satan, who must do what God wants him to do. And his Word has power. For through it we have been brought from the clutches of unbelief, and into his kingdom. And through it he will keep us with him forever. Amen.