

Chapter 17

The great physician at work

Mark 1 vv. 21 - 28.

Luke 4 vv. 31 - 37.

Around the lake of Gennesaret lay various cities and towns. For several weeks the Lord preached in these towns and cities of Galilee. It was just in despised Galilee, which the pious Pharisees from Jerusalem so much disdained, where the Lord Jesus preached the most. There He performed the greatest number of miracles. By day He travelled among the surrounding towns and in the evenings He returned to Capernaum.

On the Sabbath days too, He preached mostly in the Synagogue at Capernaum. In Nazareth He had been rejected. There they had wanted to cast Him down from the cliff top into the depths below. We told you about this in the last chapter. The inhabitants of Nazareth had therefore as it were chased away the Saviour. Not once do we read in the Bible that He returned to His former home town. He left them on that awful Sabbath for good.

Capernaum then was the city in which He now stayed at night and where He preached in the Synagogue on the Sabbath days.

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Come, in our thoughts we will just go to the Synagogue at Capernaum on a Sabbath day. This Synagogue had been built for them by a Roman Centurion (or officer).

It is full up. The inhabitants of Capernaum had gone to the house of God to hear

Jesus speak, for He was there on most Sabbaths. In Capernaum too then, the Jews listened gladly to the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth. In Capernaum too the people were amazed at the gracious words of the Saviour. They listened quietly and attentively to His calm voice; to His words of comfort.

On this Sabbath too, Jesus is preaching again. It is quiet in the Synagogue. In wrapt attention they follow the sermon of the Son of God.

Suddenly they jump with fright. The peace and reverence which reigns in the building is shattered all at once. Why? ... Listen!

One of those present gives out a piercing scream. Everyone looks in that direction in fright. There in the Synagogue sits one possessed. What is that? ... Now you must just listen carefully. Especially in the days when Jesus walked on earth, this often came about. Those "possessed" were people into whom the devil had entered. The devil then completely controlled such a person. When such a person spoke, then it was not the man who spoke, but the devil used the mouth of the unfortunate person. Just as once the devil spoke through the serpent in Paradise, so at this time Satan spoke through the mouth of the "possessed".

Now you can well understand that anyone thus possessed was someone with whom we can deeply sympathise. Poor, poor people.

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They were prisoners of the prince of darkness.

Well now, on the Sabbath day which concerns us in this chapter, there is in the Synagogue among all those present, just such a person. And that man suddenly lets out a loud scream, yes, more than a scream. He says something; he screams something.

"Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Oh and how does the man know that? ... Children, it is not the man who speaks. It is the devil who speaks. Do you hear, Satan knows the Lord Jesus? The devil says openly that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. All can hear it.

Yet Jesus does not permit devils to declare who He is. He does not need the help of the prince of darkness. The Saviour's voice is stern and commanding: "Hold thy peace, and come out of him."

The Lord says this, not to the unfortunate man, but to the evil spirit which had entered into the man.

The devil must obey. He dare not, he cannot refuse. But before he leaves the man, he will first make an attempt to kill him. Just look, the sufferer falls convulsed to the ground. In the Bible it says that the unclean spirit tore him (Mark 1 v. 26).

But the vile plan of the prince of darkness fails. The Lord Jesus is watching over the life of the poor wretch.

At once he gets up and is healed. Satan must release his prey.

Boys and girls, in Nazareth the Lord Jesus had spoken about prisoners who would be set free. That is what happens here. This poor man was a captive of the devil. But at the

command of the Son of God, he had to let him go. He was cast out of him.

The people of Capernaum have observed all this in the greatest amazement. They marvel that even the unclean spirits obey Him.

When they return to their homes soon afterwards, they talk among themselves about it. Soon the whole city knows what has taken place in the Synagogue that morning. Yes, it is even talked about in the surrounding regions.

Matthew 8 vv. 14 and 15.

Mark 1 vv. 29 – 31.

Luke 4 vv. 38 and 59.

The Lord Jesus has also departed from the Synagogue. He goes to the house of Simon Peter, for he lived in Capernaum. Peter was married and his mother-in-law was with him in the house.

When Jesus enters the dwelling however, there is a downcast atmosphere prevailing. No wonder. There is an invalid in the house. The old lady is in bed with a high temperature. She is not fit to get up.

Jesus has scarcely entered when they ask Him if He will help her; if He will heal her. They have no doubt that He can.

Shall He, who cast out the devils, have no power to heal the sick? So, with perfect confidence in His might, they ask this of Him.

Jesus does not refuse. At once He goes to the bed on which the sick one lies. He stands over her, rebukes the fever and takes her by the hand to lift her up. At the bidding of the King of kings the sickness yields. If we have a high temperature for a few days, then we become very

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weak.

Here Jesus not only rebukes the fever, but restores her strength as well. Just look what happens next. Peter's mother-in-law gets up and prepares the meal. In the Bible it says that she "ministered unto them".

This is the second miracle which Jesus performed on this Sabbath day.



*The sick on their way to the Lord
Jesus*

That is what all these people had been waiting for.

There were many sick and afflicted people in the City of Capernaum.

They had heard

how Jesus that morning in the Synagogue had healed the man possessed of a devil, and now they are on the way to the house where Jesus is staying. They are going to Him to be made whole.

Yes, but is Jesus not tired then? It is evening now surely? Can He not have some rest? ... Will He send all those unfortunates away and say "Come back tomorrow morning?" ... No, He receives all who come to Him.

The blind man has reached the Lord Jesus at last, and begs for help. With a sure step he returns home a little later, no longer uncertain, no longer groping, but with rapid paces, for he is healed. His sight has been restored.

The cripple, hobbling on a pair of crutches, taps his way along. Soon we see him walking without crutches, hopping for joy. He is released from his infirmity. Completely. Henceforth he requires crutches no more.

There go the men with the stretcher. It is now empty. The man who had lain upon it dangerously ill, walks with them. He is healed.

Over there those men return homewards, who shortly before had with the greatest difficulty held the devil-possessed man under control. Now they all walk home quietly together. The evil spirit had been subdued. The devil had been forced to release his prey, at the

Matthew 8 vv. 16 and 17.

Mark 1 vv. 32 – 35.

Luke 4 vv. 40 and 41.

It is now evening. The sun, like a fiery red ball sinks slowly below the western horizon. Soon we can see only a half sun, then a mere streak ... and finally, nothing at all. Twilight is short, night falls fast.

Then, all of a sudden the streets of Capernaum are full of life. Many people come out of doors. Just look! Here walks a blind man, carefully feeling his way so as not to fall. There a cripple hobbles along with difficulty. A little further on walk some men carrying a stretcher on which a sick man lies. Over there a few strong men hold on to a man possessed, who makes desperate attempts to break loose. The sweat streams down their faces, for those possessed were often unbelievably strong.

But, where do all these people come from so suddenly? Where are they going? Why are they here now of all times, when the sun has set and it is beginning to get dark?

With us the day is considered to end at twelve o'clock midnight, but with the Jews the day ended when the sun had set. When therefore the sun had disappeared beneath the horizon the Sabbath had ended and the new day had begun.

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command of the King of kings.

All who have come to Jesus have been healed. By whatever sickness or disease they had been overcome, they were now released from it.

Oh, what joy and happiness must have reigned in many houses of that Galilean city of Capernaum. Incurables had been restored to health.

Oh, many were satisfied with this, it was for them enough. But that Jesus could heal them from sin, that He could save them from endless ruin, to this many gave no thought. For this they felt no need. They did not want the Lord Jesus as a Saviour. They did not even believe that the Lord Jesus was the Saviour.

Were there some among them who were not only saved from their bodily ailments, but who also received the forgiveness of sin? ... We do not know.

It was late when the Lord Jesus got some rest after that long, tiring day. Then at last He could go to bed and find new strength through sleep, ready for the next day.

A few hours later, while it is still night time, and while the residents of Capernaum are still asleep, He leaves the house again and makes His way through the quiet streets.

Look, He has already left the city, and makes for a lonely wild place which hardly anyone ever visits. There He kneels down and prays to God, His heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus prayed much.

Can that be said of you, too? ... In this the Lord Jesus gives us an example too.

Oh, ask Him to teach you to pray. How will you be able to do your work properly if God gives you no strength and wisdom? Are we then not obliged to ask the Lord for them? Is He not worthy to be worshipped? Has He not the power to hear and answer those prayers? ...

Children, I am not going to answer these questions. You must answer them for yourselves, and just think about them quietly. Be sure you do!