

GOD'S TOOL BOX FOR LIFE

FIRST SERMON: INTRODUCTION TO SEVEN SIGNIFICANT CAPACITIES FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Text: Mark 1:21-28

(Chart provided in bulletin for the 7 Significant Capacities)

INTRODUCTION:

A person came to see his psychiatrist and said:

“Doctor, you’ve got to help me, I think I’m a dog.”

The doctor said, “Come on in and lie down on my couch and let’s talk about it.”

The patient said, “Oh no, I couldn’t do that, I’m not allowed on the furniture.”

And the truth is that often you and I are not healthier spiritually, emotionally, and in our relationships is because we don’t think that we’re allowed on the furniture of God’s healing power and grace.

We’ve accepted at some point and time the idea that we don’t deserve any better or can’t receive, or grace to overcome, or do any better. We’ve accepted the unhealthy states in which we live as the natural and only way that we can live. But Jesus Christ offers another teaching on this matter of our health.

According to Mark’s Gospel, chapter 1 verses 21-28, Jesus went to the Synagogue and taught as one with authority, not as a scribe. You see the difference is that Christ has the authority of God, not just knowledge. Folks in Christ’s day had become accustomed to being taught by scribes, religious leaders, who shared only their knowledge. Such teaching lacks authority and power and thus provides little authority and power to change beliefs and lives.

The people, hearing Christ on that day were astonished by his teachings because of the authority and power found in his teachings. There’s a difference in talking about something you know and talking about something you are. Being gives on authority. And as Jesus taught, one came among them with an unclean spirit. In the presence of Christ, that spirit spoke out:

“What have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” That’s a pretty smart unclean spirit, isn’t it? And of all things, Jesus said to that spirit: “BE SILENT AND COME OUT OF HIM.”

WOW An Exorcism complete with convulsions and loud screaming as the unclean spirit came out. And again the people are amazed at the authority and power both of Christ’s teachings and the exorcism of the unclean spirit.

You see, it is as Christ said, He came that we might have life and that we might have life more abundantly. I’m not sure you heard that. John 10:10, Christ speaking of his

shepherding care for his sheep said: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Say these words: That I may have life and have it abundantly. Now, do you believe that you are welcome to have life and have it abundantly? Then why don’t you believe that you are allowed on the furniture of God’s health and grace?

There are lots of unclean spirits actively involved in keeping followers of Christ under their influence. Those unclean, unhealthy spirits take many forms and send many false messages. These forces and voices of evil in our day are crippling, alienating, distorting of the truth, and destroying our very potentials. These unhealthy spirits say:

You’re not capable of changing your ways. . . You’re not significant. . . You don’t count. . . You have no power or influence over your life . . . You can’t control you emotions, your anger, your fears, your anxiety. Unclean and unhealthy spirits tell you that you can’t get along with others, you’ve had too many bad relationships in your past. Why your family of origin ruined you for life they say. And about that, may I point out again that’s just not a good excuse. You hear yourself say, I came from a dysfunctional family and I can’t. . . But keep in mind there are no such things as function families. There’s not one example of such in the entire Bible and there’s certainly no example of such in the real world either.

And another thing while we’re talking about it, life isn’t about finding some Utopia of perfect existence. Utopia doesn’t exist here. Quit looking for it and trying to obtain it and start living with and in the reality that life is about having problems, facing them, dealing with them, and learning from them. You and I are in a LIFE-LONG SCHOOL OF LEARNING and we just as well get used to the classroom experience and get on with the learning. We’re to learn how to live applying God’s truths to our circumstances.

And there will be unhealthy spirits telling you that you can’t live your Christian life with integrity. You’re just a dog in a dog eat dog world, they tell you. Those unclean, unhealthy spirits tell you – you’re incapable of making decisions and choices based on moral and ethical principles and based on sound godly wisdom and values. You’re just a dog and aren’t allowed on the furniture of God’s health and grace. Jesus has another message for you and those unclean, unhealthy spirits:

“BE SILENT AND COME OUT!” Hear that message and live under that authority today for it’s time we deal with our demons. Hear it loud and clear and begin to receive your healing. Answer the call of God for better health right now and over the next seven Sundays as we share messages from God’s Tool Box For Healthy Life. The Holy Spirit of God is here to bring the authority of Christ’s teachings and power to make you healthier in the Seven Significant Capacities For Healthy Living. I call this God’s Health Assurance and it’s founded and grounded in the teachings, authority, and power of Jesus Christ in your life and mine.

On these next 7 Sundays we will be looking at teachings that can help us to retool our lives to God’s better means of health. As we begin, I want to encourage you to come each week eager and ready to gain good knowledge but to gain it prepared for practical application of that knowledge in you life. You see, there are factors, unclean spirits, if

you will, in our lives that seek to keep us from applying knowledge we receive. Those forces are powerful. Let me illustrate by using the human physical birth process, the effects of a slow acceptance and delayed application of knowledge.

There was a time in human history when one out of every four women who gave birth to a baby, died from a disease called childbirth fever. We now know that those deaths were caused by infections from bacteria introduced by the physician's unclean hands (unclean spirits were present). Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis discovered that by washing his hands, he could reduce the mortality rate of his patients to only 8 percent. He tried to spread this wonderful knowledge but was considered a quack by his colleagues. It took more than 100 years before the medical community was convinced of the validity of this discovery and doctors began washing their hands before delivery.

Are you shocked by that 100 years between when knowledge was provided and it was applied? Well, what about you and I? How long do we delay good spiritual, emotional, and relational health in our lives because we don't clean our hands and receive the powerful, life-changing teachings of Christ?

Come prepared to receive the knowledge and apply it for your health in your life during this series of message. Make a personal prayer of commitment right now to do so. Now let's look at God's Tool Box for today. Today we have the nuts and bolts. This message is introductory to the seven others that shall follow and it is key.

When we were born, we were born with the potential of being healthy, capable individuals, but not with the capabilities themselves. Unlike the single celled amoeba, which is capable of functioning at its full potential at birth, humans acquire their capabilities primarily through apprenticeship. (Are you listening, are you hearing, are you understanding?)

Young human beings learn from those who have preceded them. When this apprenticeship is adequate, our toolboxes are filled with the essentials for effective healthy living. Get this key thought: Sigmund Freud, well know Father of Psychology/Psychiatry, said (in patriarch language of his day): "The child is father to the man." Let's make that more modernly inclusive:

The child is parent to the adult individual. In other words, the childhood experiences and equipping, parents or produces the adult. My friends, that's a half-truth. There's more, the more is that the adult must complete the equipping and the raising of the wounded child within. Tooling ourselves is our task. That is, our parents raise and prepare us to a point and then we must finish the job. To that end to assist each of us in getting on with the process of maturing in Christ and living the Christ, we are offering seven sermons on the Seven Significant Capacities For Healthy Living In Christ.

In your bulletin you will find a print out of a chart depicting these seven capacities. Note that three of them are beliefs (perceptions) and four of them are skills that are the essence of fully functioning healthy human beings.

The three beliefs are about your:

- Capabilities
- Significance
- Influence

The four skills are about your:

- Intrapersonal Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Systemic Skills
- Judgement Skills

In times of change, conflict, need, and problems, these tools, the life resource tools, are critical. In order to be a healthy individual, able to thrive in the face of life's challenges and adversity, to be resilient, able to cope, face, weal with life, each of us needs to be maturing in these seven aspects. Having resiliency in these areas promotes good health and our well-being, and gives us the ability to thrive.

It is the task of the church to help you define and establish a healthy belief system whereby you can establish you life. The teachings, the authority of Jesus the Christ through the work of God's Holy Spirit in you and in me, can cast out the unclean and unhealthy spirits that say we are incapable, insignificant, and unable to bring to bear personal power and influence to change. That very same authority of Christ, that very same Holy Spirit, gifts us with the power for self-assessment, self-control, and self-discipline. For the Spirit works in us to guide us, to convict of us against sin, to comfort us, and give us self-control and temperance, long-suffering and endurance. That Spirit of Christ gifts us to be compassionate and caring people, able to be effective in our relationships and empowers us to be responsible and live with integrity.

That very Spirit, enables us to understand and apply Christ's powerful teachings, so that we live moral and ethical lives based on Godly wisdom and Godly values, for Christ said that he came to give us abundant lives, lives of good health.

I challenge you to be present and to become healthier as we share further, these Significant Seven. This is the introduction. The teachings and authority of Christ are available to help us complete the tooling and retooling of our lives and to empower us for resilient healthy living.

Prayer