

“And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.”

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

I am going to give you the name of an actor or actress, and I want you to tell me the role that you associate with them. William Shatner (Captain Kirk). Bob Denver (Gilligan). Gal Gadot (Wonder Woman). Lorne Greene (Ben Cartwright). Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter). Lynda Carter (Wonder Woman).

All of these actors have been in other movies, television shows and more. But these roles made them famous. Sometimes actors become so identified with a role that they become typecast by these roles; in other words, it is hard for us to view them with any credibility in any other role. We always think of them based on a particular image. A good role may bring fame and success to an actor, but when they are stuck in that role, then their career options could be fairly limited.

Now, if I mention Jesus Christ, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? We speak of Him as True God and True Man. He is our Saviour and Lord. We think of Him as Redeemer, as King and even as brother. We are comforted with the message of the dying and rising Jesus, who gives Himself for us on the cross that we may have forgiveness of our sins, and who rises to give us the blessings of life through His resurrection. We are overwhelmed by the thought of the Eternal Son of God leaving His throne of glory to come to our rescue. We know Jesus is Lord. He is God. He is the Saviour of the World.

The Christian heart, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is ever awed by the greatness of our Lord. Like a glorious diamond that reflects the light in different ways, depending upon how you look at it, so in Jesus we see the many different facets of His nature and being. But for many Jesus is typecast. The role that made Him famous, if you will, is that of miracle worker, who changes water into wine or who can make the blind see and the deaf to hear. They are like King Herod, of whom we are told: *“When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.”* (Luke 23:8, ESV)

Jesus is the omnipotent, all-powerful God who can do all things. His miracles testify to that wonderful truth. More than that, we know that Jesus uses the miracles to show the truth of His Word. But, as wonderful as those miracles are, and as much as we see Jesus reveal His glory in this way, He Himself points to a higher role in our text today: *“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”* Jesus comes to heal, but His healing finds its greatest fulfilment as He heals our sinful hearts through the Word of the Gospel, as He preaches to declare to us the wonderful forgiveness and life we have through His grace so freely given to us.

I suppose we can’t fault people for seeing Jesus as the miracle worker. After all, the signs of His power are revealed again and again, in so many wonderful ways. We see that power in the simple miracle of healing as Jesus touches Peter’s mother-in-law and takes away a fever that troubled her. It shouldn’t surprise us that word of the Miracle Worker’s presence at this home brought the crowds out to see Him. Our text says: *That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.* We see scenes like this repeated again and again in the Gospels. There are always the great crowds; always the sick, the lame, the demons and the burdened. No matter what the disease, no matter how powerful the demons, the wonderful, powerful Lord works His miracles of healing. Jesus is greater than them all. He heals. He restores. He brings peace to the weary and burdened.

The miracles do indeed show that Jesus is the Almighty God of heaven and earth. When Jesus changes water into wine at that wedding in Cana, we are told: ***“This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”*** (John 2:11, ESV) When He stills the storm the disciples ask each other: ***“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”*** (Mark 4:41, ESV) Nicodemus, one of the Jewish leaders comes to Jesus at night and said: ***“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”*** (John 3:2, ESV)

But don't typecast Jesus as a mere miracle worker! When Jesus speaks of His role, He quotes the Words of Isaiah and says: ***“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.”*** (Isaiah 61:1-2, ESV) Jesus sums up this message of Isaiah as He says in our text: ***“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”***

Jesus comes to proclaim to us the wonderful good news that God has prepared for those who believe in Him. In His words are a greater healing than that worked for Peter's mother-in-law, or for anyone else that was touched by His power. Yes, physical healing is wonderful. If we have health and strength, we can give thanks to God for His blessings. But what if God doesn't grant that physical well-being to us? Even then, the Word of life brings healing to us. The real illness of our lives is the illness that is caused by sin. Actually, it is more than just an illness. It is a terminal illness. We suffer because of sin. We die because of sin. And we would suffer eternal death, separated from God for all eternity because of our sin. Sick, weak and dying, we can do nothing to change this. We can only endure our pitiful lot.

But Jesus comes to proclaim that glorious good news that bring us the healing we need. He speaks of His death, that sacrificial death that will take away the sins of the world. He speaks of His glorious resurrection from the dead, and assures us that because He lives, we also will live. He tells us of the Father's love—a love that He has for us, in spite of our sin. He tells us of the glory that is yet to be revealed to us. This is the message He wanted to preach, not just in Galilee, but throughout the whole land of Israel. It is the message that God wants proclaimed throughout the world. We hear Paul say it in our epistle lesson today: ***“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”*** (1 Corinthians 9:16, ESV) Paul knew how important that proclamation of the true Gospel is! He says: ***“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”*** ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*** (Romans 10:14-17, ESV)

If you want to typecast Jesus, don't see Him as just the miracle worker, even though He can do so many miraculous things. Don't see Him only as the loving teacher, who leads us to love one another. These are all important aspects of the Almighty Lord, who came to be one with us. Yet we rejoice that again this day the miracle-working Saviour reveals His greatest role, as the Living Word, who comes to bring us His truth and grace. The Word that created the world; the Word that can calm the wind and waves; the Word that can call dead and buried Lazarus out of the tomb is the Word who has the power to do what God wants to accomplish. Jesus is the living Word, bringing life and salvation. He is God's Word for all people!

The Word is in our Baptism, uniting us in His death and resurrection, and thereby giving us the forgiveness, life and salvation we have in Him. That Word comes to life in the Lord's Supper, as the body and blood of Christ are given to us to bring us the forgiveness and life that the Word declares we have through His body and blood. Strengthened through that Word, we are able to face each day in the hope and joy that are ours in Christ. And empowered by that Word, we, too, go to share it with people everywhere. Amen.