

A Vicarious Offering

Call to Worship: Revelation 21:1-8

1st Scripture: Isaiah 53

2nd Scripture: Matthew 8:14-17

Hymn #400- *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

Hymn #676- *More About Jesus Would I Know*

Hymn #27 (supp)- *Be Thou My Vision*

Introduction

Some of you may recall in our introduction to the Gospel of Matthew, we had considered the fact that Matthew had thoroughly laced his Gospel with Old Testament (OT) Scriptures and concepts, attempting to show his *primarily* Jewish audience that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah. And as we began to work our way through the Gospel, reaching OT quotes, we went back and looked at those quotes in their original context, showing how each text served both an immediate, relevant, historical purpose (during the time it was written), and a greater Messianic fulfillment purpose to come, as revealed by Matthew. While the Sermon on the Mount very much addressed OT concepts, especially concerning the true nature of the Law of God, and the misuse of the Law by the religious leaders, because it is a recording of the direct teachings of Christ (for those of you who have “red letter” Bibles, you will notice that Matthew, Chapters 5:3-7:27 are completely red), the phrase, “Jesus said or did this, in order to fulfill such and such a thing,” doesn’t come about. Matthew has slowed down his narrative as a means of honing in on the critical importance of the teaching given in the Sermon on the Mount.

Well, once again, in our main text, we will find Matthew, providing another narrative link, connecting our Lord’s actions to that which has been prophesied in the OT. And this connection is vitally important, bringing us back to Isaiah 53, showing the “vicarious” nature (the “substitutionary” nature) of our Lord’s *entire ministry*, ultimately culminating at the cross.

I. Peter’s Mother-in-Law is Healed

We begin then first by considering the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law. In verses 14&15, we are told, “Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.”

Interestingly enough, this short event is actually recorded in two of the other Gospel accounts, as well. In Mark 1:29-31, being given a few more of the details, we are told, “Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.” And then, in Luke 4:38-39, we are told, “Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s wife’s mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.”

In both Luke and Mark’s account, we find that this event took place, immediately after the Lord had cast an unclean spirit out of a man, in a local synagogue there in the city of Capernaum. Combining this with the verses that follow here in Matthew’s account, we find that this also was meant to be a sign of attestation, further affirming the authority, teaching and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is further interesting here (I believe), is that, this particular occasion (mentioned in all three of the Synoptic Gospels) is the only time we are told of Peter’s wife, and that, really only as a reference to her mother, Peter’s mother-in-law. That said, on one other occasion, in Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians, we do find out that Peter’s wife accompanied him throughout the course of his ministry. In 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul states, “Do we have no right to take along a *believing* wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, *and Cephas?*”

And so, we don’t have a lot of information about Peter’s wife, but we can probably draw out an important implication from the little that we do know, which can leave us with a very simple, but encouraging application. Since her mother was healed by Jesus, and then got up to serve the Lord and His Apostles, and since, she accompanied Peter throughout his missionary and ministry travels, we can presume that both “Mrs. Peter” and her mother were also devout Christians. Now, why do I make it a point to state this? Simply to note that there are many unsung heroes, not mentioned in the Scriptures, who probably did a lot more to aid in the work of the Kingdom than we realize. Remember, the Scriptures do not contain biographical sketches of anyone. And those who are mentioned in the Scriptures, and those who have a prominent part

in being mentioned in the Scriptures, are only mentioned as such, in so far, as the glory of Christ is better made known through them. In other words, the Scriptures are not ultimately about Noah and Abraham and David and Daniel and Peter and Paul...etc. They are about Christ. And everyone mentioned in the Scriptures is mentioned, ultimately, only to be an arrow, which in some way, better highlights the greater picture of the glory of Christ, and all that God wants to reveal to us, concerning Him. And so, to this end, there are a lot of people not specifically mentioned in Scripture, who have done great and glorious things for the Kingdom of God, while not necessitating their specific mention, because Christ is sufficiently presented in all of His glory, in that which we have been given. Peter and James and John and everyone else, are a means unto Christ. That is why even their faults are presented at times...because Christ's overcoming of those faults and suiting them up for ministry, not only provides us hope for growth in our weaknesses, but furthermore, glorifies the power and love of Christ, by revealing the way, in which, He builds and develops *His* church, as the Head, who has been given authority over all things, in heaven and on earth. [Note: Every instance where Mary is mentioned...]

And so, I simply say that to state, there are many "Mrs. Peter's" in this world, serving behind the scenes, doing much good for the Kingdom of God, even though we hear very little about them in this lifetime. I might venture to assume that Peter would not have fully developed to be the lead Apostle that he was, without the assistance and service of Mrs. Peter, who accompanied him throughout his missionary endeavors. [*Often, behind every good man...*"]

Needless to say, here we are given another sign, revealing the glory, power and authority of Christ, performed unto the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. We are told that she had a fever, and the Lord held her hand, rebuked the fever, and lifted her up, leading to the illness then leaving her body. And then, she got up and served them. Before we move on, we might highlight the fact that those who are healed and/or forgiven by Jesus, will always demonstrate this fact by serving Him and His people. One who has truly been touched by the love and power of grace, if they have truly been touched by that grace, will, out of their own sincere willingness and desire, give themselves over to the service of Christ. Christ's grace always brings a return of fruit-bearing unto His glory. I simply say this to highlight the importance of serving Christ and His church, if we have truly been washed by the blood of Christ. A true Christian cannot remain

a stagnate Christian for too long. It is impossible. To suggest otherwise, is to deny the true converting power of the Gospel.

II. A Vicarious Offering

Moving on then, we are further told, in verses 14-18, “When evening had come, they brought to Him (Jesus) many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’”

Now, what is extremely important about this particular text is that it identifies the “healing” ministry of Jesus with Isaiah’s prophecy about the vicarious (substitutionary) suffering of the Suffering Servant. First, we are told that He cast out demons from the demon-possessed by merely speaking a word, and then, that He also healed all who were sick with various kinds of illnesses. In case you were curious about that line in Martin Luther’s hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” where he speaks of Christ defeating/felling satan with a mere word, this would be a good representation of what Luther meant there. And his point is to emphasize the great power and authority that Christ has over the entire demonic realm, including satan himself. All our Lord needs to do, is to speak but a single Word, and the whole lot of them will fall down like a tree that has been cut through at the base. Here, we get a taste of that, as our Lord is casting down the kingdom and dominion of satan by casting out his minions one by one, with a mere word from His mouth!

But then, again, significantly, Matthew speaks of the whole gamut of these healings as a fulfillment of what Isaiah had spoken in the 53rd chapter of his Book, particularly in verse 4, where we are told, “Surely He has borne *our* griefs and carried our sorrows...” That said, let us turn back to Isaiah 53, to get a better understanding of what Matthew means, when he tells us that Christ has fulfilled this text by His healing miracles. [Read Isaiah 53:1-6]

When you consider the whole of this glorious prophecy, obviously, it speaks profoundly about the glorious suffering and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you look particularly at verses 4-6, which contain the phrase that Matthew says was fulfilled at the event recorded in our main text, you find something very important rising to the surface here. There is

a repeated emphasis on what the sufferer (Christ) has done on behalf of (or in the place of) sinners. There's a repeated "He" and "our" exchange. "*He* has born *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows...*He* was wounded for *our* transgressions, *He* was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement for *our* peace was upon *Him*, and by *His* stripes *we* are healed. All *we* like sheep have gone astray; *We* have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all..." Now, the sufferings of the Lord continue to be recorded in the verses that follow, summing up the matter well in verse 8, "For *He* was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of *My people*, *He* was stricken." And again, in verse 10, we find that His soul was made an offering for sin unto this end.

And so, when Matthew quotes Isaiah, it is important to recognize that he is showing the vicarious/substitutionary nature of Christ's suffering; it is an expression of what Christ has done, particularly in His suffering, as a substitute, and on behalf of, His sinful and fallen people. This is the great emphasis of Matthew in our main text. Now, here's the question that must be asked? Does the suffering of Christ relate to the *physical* or *spiritual* sufferings of His people? In other words, was the package of His substitutionary atonement offered to redeem the *physical* or *spiritual* nature of man? Well, the answer is "both." Christ's vicarious atonement was offered to redeem both the physical and spiritual components; that is the whole of man. And it is absolutely critical to understand this. Christ redeems the whole man!

Now, I say this, because we, in the Reformed faith (in particular) can easily tend to limit the sufferings of Christ unto accomplishing the redemption of our *souls*. And sometimes, we do this as a response to extreme charismaticism. And sometimes, some charismatics can tend to emphasize the *physical* aspects of Christ's vicarious atonement (focused solely on the "here and now") while missing the *spiritual* component of His atonement. But, it is important to understand that both are true. In fact, in our text, where Matthew records the fulfillment of this portion of Isaiah, he happens to be linking the *physical* healing of the people, to that which fulfills Isaiah's prophecy. This is undeniable. He says it very clearly. Jesus is healing all kinds of people and casting out demons, and Matthew states that He did this in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4. And so, what we find then, for starters, is that Jesus was able to provide the healings that He provided, for those who were afflicted, because He Himself would bear their infirmities (or,

the consequence of sin that produced them) in His own sufferings. In other words, He was able to provide relief to those who were suffering the natural causes of sin, in anticipation of His dealing with the natural causes of sin, by His own sacrificial offering.

And to this end, brethren, we have the greatest assurance of our own complete resurrection from the dead, in the body, new and glorified, based upon what Christ had accomplished in the *physical* atoning aspect of His sacrifice. He redeems the body as well! He makes the body, which breaks down because of sin, whole again! To this end, the healing miracles which He performed, which were to serve primarily as signs that authenticated His teaching, authority and ministry, also serve to display the glory of the physical resurrection of the body, toward which we look! And this is why, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15, it is blatant heresy to deny the *physical* resurrection of the body. To deny our upcoming bodily resurrection, which some are doing today (especially in the “full preterist” camp) is to diminish and limit the power and glory of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice and resurrection. He bore our infirmities, both physical and spiritual, so that, He would redeem the whole man. This is what Matthew is speaking about, when he speaks of Christ fulfilling Isaiah 53:4, by virtue of His healing miracles. You see, those healing miracles were mere small tastes, foreshadowings, as it were, of the final glory of the resurrection of all of His people unto eternal life. Indeed, those who were healed ultimately later died, at some point, didn’t they? And so, they were temporal in nature even, meant to point to that which was to come eternally, through Christ’s atonement.

And so, Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice has both *physical* and *spiritual* implications, and here in Matthew’s Gospel, the *physical* is specifically highlighted, without detracting from the spiritual, which is given all throughout the NT, as well. I believe that Peter highlights the whole package of our Lord’s vicarious atonement when he states in 1 Peter 2:21-25, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

III. Conclusive Thoughts

Brethren, in all of this, we find a very important reality then, emerging to the foreground. And sadly, there are some who would deny this reality, thinking they are vindicating the goodness and kindness of God, when in fact, all they are doing is severely diluting His holiness.

People don't generally take well to the idea of a "vicarious" (substitutionary) offering, because it assumes that God is wrathful toward sin, and that we are so corrupt and wicked, that God required the brutal crushing and killing of His own Son, in our place, to secure our redemption. The natural man doesn't want to see his own sin as "that bad," and he doesn't want to see God as "that holy." But, the fact of the matter is that both are true. God is that holy, and we are that bad. And when we diminish those realities, we distort the true nature of God, and the severity of our own condition and offenses against God. And in turn, we diminish the Gospel of grace, and the great power of grace, and the unfathomable love of God, which drives us to love Him and serve others from a sincere heart. What makes the Gospel so glorious is that while God is that holy (by nature), and we are that sinful (because of the fall), the love of God shines so brightly, in the distance that he goes to satisfy the good demands of His Law, by offering up His beloved Son on our behalf. If you eliminate the whole concept of Christ died "in *my* place," "on *my* behalf," "bearing *my* sins," then you have completely stripped the Gospel of its message and power. A gospel that denies the "vicarious" (substitutionary) nature of Christ's sacrifice, is a false gospel, which cannot save anyone. Was Christ the example of moral perfection *par excellence* for us? Of course! Do we see in Christ the greatest example of humility, kindness, gentleness and Christian love? Absolutely! But, if you don't see Christ as the sacrificial Lamb of God, offering Himself up on our behalf, then you've missed that most critical aspect of His life and ministry, and you have greatly watered down the depth of His moral perfection, humility, kindness, gentleness and Christian love. "God made Him who knew no sin, *to become sin for us*, so that we might become the righteousness of God, in Him." That is the true summation of the Gospel that we proclaim, and that which drives us to live wholly for Him!

And this gets down to the urgent need that every single human being has. If you are not in Christ, my friend; if you are not a Christian; if you have not repented of your sins and taken hold of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, then you have to see that this is the very crux of the

matter, and why you are on extremely dangerous ground. You see, the fact of the matter is, you are a creature, and you belong to a Creator. And this Creator is holy and righteous. And His law, which comes from His nature, is as unbendable as His nature. He can't and won't stop being God. And you and I; all of us, are sinners, born with a nature that is offensive to our God. We are natural born enemies of God. But, God has done something marvelous to provide us with a way back to Him. He sent His Son, who became a man, to lay down His own life on behalf of sinners. There's an "in the place of" embedded in His sacrifice. He died in *my* place, and took *my* sin upon Him. But unless He is the object of your personal faith, and unless you repent of your sins, you have no part in His offering, and you are on your own. And you will bear the entire weight and load of your sins, when you *soon* stand before God.

Friends, please, don't die in your sins! Christ alone can remove your guilt and penalty, having borne both in His own body on the cross. But, you must seek Him, and believe into Him by faith. Call upon Him, repenting of your sins, and be saved!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25