

Let's turn to Matthew 4:23-25.

Matthew 4:23-25 (ESV) – 23 And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. **24** So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and He healed them. **25** And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

These verses provide us with an outline of Jesus' earthly ministry. First and foremost, He **taught**. Then, He **preached** the Gospel of the Kingdom. Finally, He **healed** to establish His divine authority.

Let's talk about these in more detail.

TEACHING

Matthew 4:23-25 (ESV) – 23 And He went throughout all Galilee, **teaching in their synagogues ...**

Jesus' priority was always teaching. This is true of Scripture as whole. There is not a single book of the Bible devoted to healing, but truth and teaching run from beginning to end. The book of Proverbs is entirely devoted to teaching wisdom. It is evidence of how greatly God values wisdom and right thinking and the necessity of teaching others, whether children who have not yet learned or fools (those who should have learned but have not).

The purpose of teaching is to present, explain, and apply the Word of God to the listeners.

There was a time when Jesus sent His disciples out on a preaching tour of Israel. After a period of time they returned, and He tried to take them away privately to

rest across the Sea of Galilee. The crowds saw them, however, and hurried ahead, and were waiting when they reached the shore.

Mark writes this,

Mark 6:34 (ESV) – 34 When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and **He had compassion on them**, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. **And He began to teach them many things.**

What does the Good Shepherd do when He sees a multitude who are like sheep without a shepherd? He teaches them. After this He fed them, and that was a precious, kind miracle to perform. But first, He taught them. Food for the body is only helpful for a few hours; food for the soul is helpful for a lifetime and an eternity. Just as He put the needs of His own soul before the needs of His body (during His first temptation), He tends to the needs of the souls of these people before trying to satisfy the needs of their bodies.

Mark 10 presents events just a few weeks before the crucifixion. Jesus was in Capernaum.

Mark 10:1 (ESV) – 1 And He left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to Him again. And again, **as was His custom, He taught them.**

Notice those last words – **as was His custom, He taught them.** Teaching was such a great priority that even after His resurrection Jesus' focus was on teaching His disciples. In the Gospels Jesus shepherds His sheep by teaching them His Word. The Scripture is clear that He intends His church to be cared for by elders; those elders must be able to teach. And the Scripture says,

1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV) – 17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, **especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.**

Jesus was frequently called “Teacher” by His own disciples, by others, and even by

His enemies. He was never called “Healer.”

PREACHING

Matthew 4:23-25 (ESV) – 23 And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom ...**

The second part of our outline is preaching. What is preaching? **It is a proclamation or declaration aimed at conversion.** It is not a conversation. It is not open to negotiation.

Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. What is the Gospel of the Kingdom? It is not what we know to be the Gospel. The word “gospel” means “good news.” Jesus preached the good news of the Kingdom of God. During the course of His earthly ministry He did not focus on His substitutionary death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, salvation by grace alone through faith alone, or the other truths that we associate with the Gospel (although they are certainly present in His teaching). He was telling them that the Kingdom of God had come to them. THAT was the good news. The long wait for the Kingdom was over.

When the prophet Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream he distinguished between the plurality of earthly kingdoms and the singular Kingdom of God:

Daniel 2:44 (ESV) – 44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the Kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms [the kingdoms of the world] and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever

Jesus preached the inauguration of that Kingdom, and called for people to repent and believe in response.

There is obviously overlap between teaching and preaching, but there are some differences as well. Teaching is all about the **presentation** and **explanation** of the truth. Preaching is the **proclamation** of the message. Jesus taught His disciples

and the multitudes, but He is only said to preach to the multitudes. Preaching involves the proclamation of a message that is aimed at change; once change has taken place, teaching takes the priority. And of course, the high-water mark of preaching is preaching for the sake of spiritual conversion; it hopes that the unconverted listener will hear and believe and be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who are converted then need to be taught for a lifetime.

HEALING

Matthew 4:23-25 (ESV) – 23 And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and **healing every disease and every affliction among the people.**

Jesus did not come primarily to heal, but to preach and teach. **His healings and other miraculous works were the credentials of His divine authority.** That is, they provided a serious reason to listen to what Jesus had to say, but the healing itself was not the message He proclaimed. These healings were not just a nice thing to do. They were a fulfillment of prophecy. Through Jesus Christ the blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, and the dead were raised. These were the works the Messiah would do. They provided the credentials that identified Jesus as the promised Savior. Jesus said to the Pharisees,

John 10:37-38 (ESV) – 37 If I am not doing the works of My Father, then do not believe Me; **38** but if I do [the works of My Father], even though you do not believe ME, believe THE WORKS, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father.”

But they didn't believe; the next verse says that they tried to arrest Him, but He escaped from their hands.

It's important that we understand that healing is NOT a sign of God's approval. Jesus healed EVERYONE who came to Him or was brought to Him, regardless of

their spiritual state. He never failed to heal when He set out to heal. In John 5 He healed a man at the pool of Bethesda who didn't know who He was, didn't believe in Him, and instead trusted in an old wives' tale, and even turned Jesus in to the authorities after he had been healed. Healing says nothing about one's relationship to God. Jesus said in Matthew 5:45,

Matthew 5:45 (ESV) – 45 For [God] makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

He healed in exactly the same way, without regard for someone's spiritual state.

Do you know what DOES reveal someone's spiritual state? Whether or not they understand and believe the Scriptures. This is consistently seen in the Gospels. Jesus said to the Pharisees,

John 8:47 (ESV) – 47 "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Months later the Jews said to Jesus, "If You are the Christ, tell us plainly!"

John 10:25-27 (ESV) – 25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. **27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Whether or not someone is healed says NOTHING about their relationship with God. Understanding and believe the Word IS an meaningful indication that someone is right with God.

HOW WAS JESUS RECEIVED?

Matthew 4:24 (ESV) – 24 So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and He healed

them. **25** And great crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

HIS FAME SPREAD. You probably have a series of maps in the back of your Bible. If you find the one that shows Palestine in general (**it might look like this one**), you can see how great an area heard about Jesus. They heard about Him throughout **Syria**, north of Galilee. They heard about Him all through **Galilee**, of course, but they also heard about Him all through the **Decapolis**, the area to the east. They heard of Him in **Jerusalem**, the heart of Israel, and **Judea**, the southern part of Israel, and **beyond the Jordan**, east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. It's an area of over 6,000 square miles.

PEOPLE SOUGHT HIM OUT. Now, Jesus came doing three things. He taught the Word of God. He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. And He healed. What attracted the crowds? It wasn't His teaching or His preaching, but His healings. Massive crowds sought Him out because of the healings and the miracles. They proclaimed Him to be a prophet, and tried to make Him king by force, because He fed 5,000 men, plus women and children.

People in our time flock to so-called faith healers, a few because they are desperate, but most because they are fascinated. This happens in spite of the fact that these modern healers have never healed a single person; there is not a single credible story of healing, in spite of the hundreds of millions these people rake in.

Well, if people flock to false healers today, how do you think would they have responded when the Lord Jesus ACTUALLY healed EVERY sort of condition?

The first verses of Matthew 5 tell us how Jesus responded to these crowds:

Matthew 5:1-2 (ESV) – 1 Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. **2 And He opened His mouth and TAUGHT them ...**

He was not carried away by His own fame. He kept teaching as His primary

ministry. He taught His disciples. He taught the crowds. And while the crowds flocked to Him because of the miracles, they ran from His teachings. John 6 opens with the feeding of the 5,000, the same ones that said He was a prophet, and wanted to make Him king by force. But when He taught them clearly about the sovereignty of God in salvation, they were insulted and offended, and when the dust settled, only the twelve remained there.

LET'S BRING THIS HOME.

Jesus' earthly ministry had three components. They are given to us in order of significance and importance. Let's take them in reverse order.

Jesus HEALED in order to prove His authority to teach and preach. He granted the same power to His apostles to perform similar miracles, but the miraculous events of the Bible fade away quickly in the book of Acts. It isn't long before miracles are no longer found, and instead we see the steady, faithful, teaching and preaching of the Word. Does the Lord heal today? Of course He does. Does He heal through people GIFTED as healers. No. No one today possesses those apostolic gifts, because there are no longer any apostles. But God does heal in response to faith and prayer, according to His will, His time, and His glory. Now, He might not heal at all, or He might heal over time and through human intervention. Miraculous healings are far more rare, but He grants them by His grace.

Jesus PREACHED the good news that the Kingdom of God had arrived. God is at work in this world to save His people, and to confirm His judgment against the wicked. He created all things in order to manifest the fulness of His glory. Jesus Christ is the only true King in all of creation; all others are subject to Him and will answer to Him. One day His Kingdom will burst into public view, and the kingdoms of the world will be overthrown. That is the message we are to proclaim as well. Salvation is not about personal fulfillment or self-affirmation. Salvation in Christ is about being reconciled to the Creator and being made a subject of His coming Kingdom. Evangelism should not be about how sinners can get God into their lives, but how God rescues sinners from their lives, and fills them with HIS life.

And first and foremost, Jesus TAUGHT. He presented the truth of God, explained it, and applied it to His listeners. The Bible is where life is. It is where truth is. The Bible contains all the truth we need for life and godliness. The power of Scripture is not in the words printed on the page, but rather the work of the Holy Spirit to awaken our hearts to His truth, and bring them to bear on our lives.

So we must be taking in the Word of God. And while it's good to READ the Word, the Lord intended for His Word to be PREACHED. When the preacher does his job, the Word presses upon us in a unique way. When I read the Word all by myself, I can easily let my eyes skip over unpleasant statements, and I can read whole chapters without every really being challenged. When I listen to someone preach the Word, they make me hear the parts I might skip over, and they bring out the conclusions that I might miss on my own. The best way to hear the Word of God preached is in your local church; I work hard to be a faithful preacher of the Scriptures. But there are also some excellent teachers on the internet: John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, Steve Lawson, Tom Ascol, and many others. If you want to broaden your horizons, let me encourage you to visit SermonAudio.com. One Hope Fellowship is now one of their broadcasters, and they have a fantastic library of sermons.

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