

## “Capernaum – Healing that Changes Lives

**Theme: Journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem**

Sermon Scripture: Mark 1:21-28, 32-24

**Family Activity for the Week:** As a family, find stories in your Bibles where Jesus heals people. (Some examples include Mark 8:22-26; Luke 8:43-48; John 4:46-54). Discuss what these stories have in common. What differences do you see? Choose one to act out as a family, or if you prefer, draw the scenes instead. As you divide the story into smaller scenes, what do you notice or learn about Jesus? What about the people involved in the story? Maybe someone you know is in need of healing. How can you be a part of their story in a way they would feel the presence and love of Jesus? Could you decorate a card or prepare a meal? Maybe you could offer a hug or a smile. Always offer your prayers.

**Monday, April 8** – Read Matthew 4:12-22. Matthew set the context for much of Jesus’ ministry: he left his hometown of Nazareth (a tiny farming village), and based himself in Capernaum, a larger fishing town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Trade routes often brought Gentiles through Capernaum. Jesus healed and preached there and called fishermen from the area as his first disciples.

- The gospel of John tells more about how Andrew and Peter came to follow Jesus (see John 1:40-42). Matthew emphasized that this was not a part-time interest; “they left their nets” wasn’t so much a job change as a life change. When and how did you hear Jesus say, “Come, follow me”? How did you respond? How is your life different because of following Jesus?
- Scholar Myron Augsberger wrote of Jesus’ call to repent, “It is not first a moral change, but is first a change in the orientation of one’s self. Since the development of the science of psychology, conversion is understood as a change of identification and self-image, a decision to identify our lives with Jesus Christ.” In what ways can efforts to “be good” without a change in our inner identity be like putting a Band-Aid on a serious illness? What disciplines keep you committed to identifying your whole life with Jesus Christ, letting his power transform the inner springs of your being?

**Prayer:** *Jesus, I know what it is to ‘live in the dark.’ I choose to identify myself with you as Lord of my life. Shine your “great light” into my very self—and then out of me to others. Amen.*

**Tuesday, April 9** – Read Mark 1:21-34. In Jesus’ day, most of today’s medical and psychological insights into human hurts weren’t available. Yet nothing we know about epilepsy or mental illness would cause a person to accurately peg Jesus as “the holy one from God.” This story likely gives us a peek at the cosmic conflict between good and evil. Jesus’ confident teaching and healing both shook and drew people. Then, as now, people needed physical, spiritual and emotional healing.

- Commentator Stephen Short observes that the effect of Jesus’ teaching and healing was to “excite wonder, but not to evoke faith.” Have you ever experienced something that caused wonder in you, even if you didn’t exactly “believe” it? What are the things that move you from uninvolved wonderment to life-changing faith in Jesus?
- Verse 34 used expansive language. In Semitic idiom, it implied that Jesus healed all who were brought to him. In the view of his day, it also took in virtually every human ailment: he healed “all kinds of diseases” and cast out “many demons.” God usually works through people trained in physical and emotional healing—but it’s still God at work. What hurt do you bring to Jesus today? Are you open to whatever kind of help and healing he gives you?

**Prayer:** *Lord, you know even my most carefully hidden or deeply buried hurts and fears. I ask for your healing touch and open myself to whatever means you wish to use to heal me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, April 10** – Read Mark 2:1-12. Homes excavated in Capernaum show a maximum capacity for about 50 people in the ‘living room.’ When four friends tried to bring their sick friend to Jesus on a stretcher, the room was full. So, they got creative! Most houses then had an outer staircase to the roof, which was usually made of branches and rushes laid over the roof beams and covered with dried mud. They climbed up, dug through, and laid him at Jesus’ feet.

- If you had been there when a paralyzed man was, with great effort, placed at Jesus’ feet, would you have been surprised when Jesus said, “Child, your sins are forgiven”? What does Jesus’ choice of

remedy suggest to you about his “diagnosis”? What connection(s) do you believe there might be between sins being forgiven and physical healing?

- The man would have stayed paralyzed without his four friends’ energetic, creative caring. When was the last time you were able to be a “stretcher bearer” for someone else? Who has been a “stretcher bearer” for you? How determined and creative are you willing to be to bring Christ’s help to someone you know who needs it?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, thank you for caring about the well-being of my body and of my inner self. Help me to live each day in the beautiful reality of your forgiving, restoring grace. Amen.*

**Thursday, April 11** – Read Matthew 12:9-14. Israel’s religious leaders, especially the group known as Pharisees, created a hedge of strict rules around the Old Testament law. But Jesus knew God’s heart. He knew that love, not rule-keeping, was at the heart of every commandment (see Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus wasn’t destroying Sabbath observance, but showing what it was meant to look like.

- For many Christians, the weekend day of worship seems like any other day except for going to church. What is your “Sabbath” experience like? Have you considered using this one day a week as a time to be with family and friends more meaningfully? Might you, like Jesus, use the day to bring God’s healing into your community? Ask God to help you choose one way to make your Sabbath keeping more like Jesus’.
- In today’s scripture, Jesus healed the man at an unexpected time and place. Imagine the man’s surprise and joy as he flexed his restored hand. Picture Jesus present at your church (he is, you know). Unexpectedly he approaches you, and you know he senses your need, your figurative “withered hand.” Offer your need to Jesus. “Stretch out” your very self to him and let him make you well.

**Prayer:** *O God, make me like Jesus as I pray John Wesley’s words—to “do all the good I can, by all the means I can, in all the ways I can, in all the places I can, at all the times I can, to all the people I can, as long as ever I can.” Amen.*

**Friday, April 12** – Read Mark 5:21-34. A desperate woman sought Jesus. He moved away, followed by a crowd, to help a synagogue leader named Jairus’ sick daughter. (We’ll look at that case tomorrow.) The woman’s problem would be serious today, but it was worse then. Jewish law (see Leviticus 15:25-27) saw her condition as permanently “unclean,” like a leper. She was forbidden to touch anyone; hence her furtive touch of Jesus’ garment. But “Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him.”

- What a burden of shame this woman must have carried, along with her physical issues. Many people saw ailments like hers as judgments from God (see John 9:2). How do you see yourself? Are there things in your life you’d rather keep hidden? Was Jesus being unkind when he called the healed woman forward—or was he freeing her from shame as well as from her physical disorder?
- Commentary writer William Barclay noted that the Jewish Talmud offered cures for this woman’s condition like “carrying the ashes of an ostrich-egg in a linen rag in summer and a cotton rag in winter; or carrying a barley corn found in the dung of a white she-ass.” Have you tried to deal with shame, guilt or other pain on your own, using various self-help “folk remedies”? How can Jesus’ love reshape your efforts in more effective directions?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, thank you for letting your power flow for the fearful, forlorn woman in this story. Even when I’m afraid or ashamed, I ask you to continue healing me. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 13** – Read Mark 5:35-43. As Mark told his story, Jesus’ ministry had already met hostility from the religious authorities (see Mark 2:6, 24; 3:6, 22). With his daughter deathly ill, Jairus (“one of the synagogue leaders”) laid aside any objections he might have had to Jesus’ work. When messengers came saying the girl had died, Jesus encouraged Jairus, saying, “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.” He repaid the synagogue leader’s trust by giving him back his daughter.

- When Jesus said the girl was “only sleeping” (verse 39), he did not mean she hadn’t died. Even then, people knew well how to distinguish death from unconsciousness—professional mourners weren’t called out when a person was still breathing. Jesus meant that, because he was there, her time in death would be no longer than a sleep (see also John 11:11-14). How is Jesus’ power over even death a source of hope and confidence for you as you face life with all its uncertainties?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, when life is challenging, I feel you taking my hand and encouraging me to “get up.” Thank you that by your grace I may live without fear of death or anything else this life may bring. I offer you my love and loyalty. Amen.*