

The hospital is the place where you expect to get better. There doctors will help you with whatever is wrong. You go looking for healing. No one thinks the hospital purposefully gives us health problems. They wouldn't make people sick to drum up business. Give people illnesses so the doctors can practice. Spread disease to give the staff opportunity to work through disease containment in real world situations. Hospitals just don't work that way.

Plenty of people think that God works that way. He makes people sick to drum up more prayers. Gives people illnesses so that he can practice. Spreads disease indiscriminately so that he and his angels have the opportunity to work in real world situations. Some people think God is purposefully giving humans sickness and disease for his own gain. On some level they're partly right.

God doesn't deal with believers in a cold or careless way. He's loving and caring. The gospel for today shows that sometimes love includes allowing illness, disease, and disability even in our lives. His encouragement is to...

Look for healing
Jesus allows needs for his purposes
Jesus heals both body and soul

Sign language goes back to around 1817. That's when formalized sign language like we know today got its start. So when **"Some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man."** Jesus had little way to communicate with him. Isolated because of hearing loss, the man probably was frightened and unsure of what Jesus would do. But Jesus was standing with this very man at this very moment for a reason. This particular deaf man's needs and disabilities would provide Jesus the opportunity to show his healing power.

Ever hear someone ask, "If God is so good why would he allow someone to suffer deafness, blindness, or the inability to speak? In fact why would God allow anyone to suffer at all?" Unbelief just loves to mock anyone who calls himself good but then allows misery and pain. And if we're the ones dealing with that misery we know the question well. Dealing with hearing loss causes me a lot of problems, and God's letting it happen. God's actually allowing the pain in my neck, hips, or knees? God allows me to get dementia, Alzheimer's, or another mental disorder. Questioning God's love in those situations is automatic for your sinful nature. Unconsciously we're driven to doubt God, turn from him, or learn to cope apart from him.

But there's no doubt about Jesus' love for this deaf man? Jesus traveled out of his way, through a foreign country just to meet him. Jesus took him aside, knelt down in front of him to deal with him personally. Face to face the deaf man learned of the Savior's compassion. But none of it would've ever happened if this man wasn't deaf. That casts his needs in a different perspective. The needs brought the Savior close. The needs got the Savior showing compassion.

Cancer, job loss, and the H1N1 virus can put your health in jeopardy. But the prophet Isaiah puts your needs in a different perspective. **"Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...he will come to save you."** Knowing Jesus allowed the bad to happen in your life, but that there's no better time for him to get close to you than when you're completely helpless and in need keeps you strong. The compassionate Savior kneels down as you open the Scriptures crushing your sinful doubts regarding God's love. Take note of the road he traveled. Not the easy one, but the road leading to suffering, trials, and the cross. Trouble and need are part of this world, but Jesus uses them. Our needs bring the Savior close so, so close that by his cross we overcome. He lives after the cross; we will live after our crosses too.

Each week after my Bible study with the seniors at Hefner Mansions, they'll come over, shake my hand, and tell me how happy they are I came. God's Word brings about gratitude. But I know what's really going on. These are people with pains and loneliness we can only imagine. But God's Word really brings the Savior close to them. For those moments their problems are manageable, the pain not as strong. Jesus cares about you too. He isn't dumping problems into your lap so you gasp and give up. Jesus is a compassionate Savior who allows your needs so he can go to work in your life.

The last time you went to the doctor did he or she come close to you, check you over, and send you away with nothing? We would not stand for a doctor who doesn't give a diagnosis. Doctors like that are not good to us. Jesus isn't that kind of doctor. He's the kind of doctor that looks people over, knows their problems, and diagnoses their illness. Then he's also the kind of doctor who heals, but not just the body. While Jesus does care about the body, his compassion extends far beyond our earthly bodies. Jesus heals both body and soul.

Something about Jesus' actions here are puzzling. **"Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven."** Seems more gross than helpful. But think about it from the deaf man's perspective. Jesus needed to communicate. Putting his fingers in the ears said he would do something about his inability to hear. Touching his tongue that he would give him the ability to speak. But Jesus was concerned about more than this man's body; he cared about his soul too. With one look towards heaven Jesus showed this man the gospel even though he couldn't hear the gospel. His physical healing would come from a compassionate God who longed to save him. The Savior didn't want him spending eternity in hell so he healed him physically so that he might heal him spiritually.

I read an article this week that Patrick Swayze heroically fought pancreatic cancer for two years. Thanks to modern medicine he made it long past when others thought. Is this a miracle? Maybe, I don't know. But I do know that more time is not always what God gives. If you're fighting what Patrick Swayze had, or some other deadly disease don't expect God to work a miracle just so you can live longer. He cares more about your eternal soul because you've got a much greater problem, a sin problem. Sometimes we beat the disease. Sometimes we overcome the pain. But we never escape the sinful condition that infects not just our bodies but our souls.

Look for healing because that's what Jesus came to fight for. He kneels down by you in your dreadful pains and immense troubles and says, ***"Ephphatha which means be opened."*** The very words of Scripture have the power to open ears once closed off to any spiritual promises. Our ears are opened to hear Christ Jesus as Savior. That's the greatest miracle you'll ever experience in life. Physically you may still face pains and troubles, but spiritually you're healed for eternity in Christ.

Good news always travels fast, but Jesus was concerned about word spreading to far too fast. He wasn't about getting glory or becoming their live-in doctor. Jesus was going to lay down his life, but not yet. He commanded them not to spread the word, but they did. When Jesus brings you from spiritual sickness to spiritual health he welcomes you sharing with others. Share what his grace has done for you. Speak the praises of the Savior who healed both body and soul.

The next time you're sick or going to the hospital think how God using that need for his purposes. Not to punish you, but to draw you close. The compassionate God sent his Son so that he might spare you the eternal suffering of hell. Everything he does while you're here is meant to get you there. Many times it's through the suffering and misery that Jesus enters our lives to show us love, mercy, and kindness just when we need it most. Jesus brings the healing you've been looking for. Healing not just for the body, but for the soul.