

Living God's Word Through Love by Jonathan Fiedler
Psalm 41 and Mark 2:1-12
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Some of you may wonder why a twenty-one year old junior in college is preaching a sermon. The reality of the matter is: I have been listening to sermons my entire life and I have always wanted to preach my own sermon one day. Both my parents are Presbyterian ministers. They are Co-Pastors at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Roanoke, Virginia. I respect them so much, and love them dearly for what they have meant to me in my life. However, my appreciation for their ministry has not always been so evident.

Let me tell a story that goes way back in the glory days of growing up. I feel that I was a tad immature when I was in elementary school, as was probably expected of me. Actually, I still have many ways in which I can grow wiser, as I am still maturing. But, during the Wonder Years of about nine or ten years old, I did not enjoy listening to sermons. I may have listened to my parents preach for the first five minutes. Then, I began to lose focus during the next five minutes (which were usually spent drawing pictures of my sports heroes) while sitting next to my great friend, Tony Schwartzfeger. But, after listening to ten minutes of preaching, I became restless as a child. Today, I love to hear my parents or Dr. Dan preach, because I realize how awesome their messages are. But this was not how I felt while I was nine years old. So after ten minutes of preaching, I would go to some of my patented "End this sermon now" moves. First, I would point to my watch. After two minutes of that, I would pull a, "Cut it out" sign (draw a finger across my neck). I feel terrible mentioning it now, but it is the truth. Today I cannot get enough of the weekly sermons from either my parents or from Dr. Dan. I really appreciate their divinely inspired wisdom.

Relating back to the New Testament parable, many parallels can be drawn from God as a healer. In many ways, Jesus can be visualized as a master Physician who can heal all of our ailments in life, whether they are physical injuries or psychological disorders. I still remember very fondly sitting in front of the TV this past summer with my parents, while we were watching ABC World News and Report with Peter Jennings (may Peter Jennings rest in peace). Nonetheless, we were all watching the world news report when we saw a story that changed my life.

Let me tell you all about our brothers and sisters in West Africa. If you are born disabled in Ghana, West Africa you once were most likely to be mistreated by your family and friends in order to avoid the shame of having a disabled family member. If you survived this torment, you were likely to be hidden away in a room; and if you're not hidden, you were destined to become a beggar on the streets for the rest of your life. Of the twenty million people in Ghana, two million are disabled. There is new-found hope, however, in the fight for justice among the disabled in West Africa. The story of Emmanuel Yeboah is one that has changed the world.

Emmanuel was born with a severely deformed right leg. Today, Emmanuel is breaking down barriers and transforming social norms across his country. This amazing man's message is vital: people with disabilities are valuable contributors to society. His way of conveying this worthy cause is inspirational. Emmanuel began his quest with a bicycle ride, over 600 kilometers, across Ghana with one leg and continues to spread his vision with amazing determination and vigor. Just by pedaling across Africa, Emmanuel is making a bold statement that all of God's children need to be taken care of and appreciated, no matter how unhealthy or sick they may be.

This is a message that can be applied to all people around the world: take care of our sick brothers and sisters.

Although the Bible states that as believers, we should not live with arrogance that we have already won the gift of eternal blessings through life in heaven (Philippians 3:12). I think it is acceptable to fantasize about how great heaven is. I think Heaven is just one huge kingdom of love, where all people are taken care of and accepted. In heaven, I do not think there will be any PPOs or HMOs or any health insurance restrictions. I believe that in heaven, health care will be free and plentiful to all of God's children.

Let me discuss with you, my dear friends, my career aspirations growing up. When I was two years old, my family moved to Winston-Salem from Roanoke. Although I cannot recollect this claim, my mother mentions that I had respected the moving men who helped us move our belongings. When I was two years old, I believe I wanted to be a moving man. I still hold anyone who can move heavy objects with a lot of reverence. When I was in second grade, I believe I wanted to own my own hotel. I guess I was interested in helping out people with the hope of running my own hotel. This hope did not last very long. Around fourth grade, I wanted to be a weatherman. I thought it would be fun to stand up in front of a lot of people and discuss weather. Weathermen do always seem to be very friendly; I have nothing but respect for weathermen and weatherwomen. Around seventh grade, my whole perspective changed. I made the seventh grade basketball team. From this point on, I dedicated my life to basketball. I still have a love for the Roundball, and I always will, but I found my calling through the events that happened around May of my sophomore year in high school.

I was driving my teammate home from basketball practice on May 16, 2001. It was raining, and I had only had my license for eleven months. The next month was a time I will never remember, yet it has changed my life forever in a positive way.

I was in a car accident that night. I was alone in my car, thanks be to God. The driver that I ran into as I pulled out onto Peters Creek road was not significantly hurt, more glory to God. I, however, was knocked unconscious. I had a severe traumatic brain injury, as I was left in a coma for nineteen days. Some may say this was a terrible accident. In retrospect, I believe it has provided many positive effects in my life. There may have been some pain created from this accident, but the only regret I have from this event was that it didn't happen earlier in my life. My wreck may have caused a lot of worry and fear for my friends and family, but my Heavenly Father never was worried. God has always been in control, as God has had divine purpose for my accident. I am not up here today to tell you how tough the recovery was, nor am I up here to tell you how hard it was for me as a person. I am up here today to bring all the glory to God in my recovery, for God has set me on solid ground to stand.

The basketball number that chose me growing up was number forty. Let me recite to you Psalm 40:

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord."

Before my accident, I had a weak faith and I certainly did not want to start preaching any sermons. Today, I feel stronger than ever, especially when I give ALL the credit to the Lord for my recovery. God is great.

Through this endeavor, I have found my calling. I feel I was born to become a Physical Therapist. It doesn't matter how many classes I have to take over again, nor does it matter what

people say when they try to tell me how hard it is. I feel like I was born to help heal people, and that is exactly what I am going to do. Everyone is different and we all have different callings. I do feel that it is important to use your calling to help people, and to put some more love into the world. Whether you are a teacher, a preacher, a lawyer, a business man or woman, a nurse, an administrator, or a blue-collar worker, I feel we all need to find some purpose in knowing that our calling is in helping people.

Psalm 41 discusses reaching out to poor citizens. I want to comment that I believe the psalmist David was not only encouraging all people to help out our brothers and sisters who have to work two jobs just to put food on the table, but I also think David was discussing our divine call to help out people who are broken-hearted, or people who are going through some health problems, as well as people who may be lonely or not involved with the popular crowd. David writes that we all need to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves in this wonderful walk we call life. I think giving away your money is only a small portion about what David is talking about. You may not have much money at all to give away. Yet, you have a smile to share with those who do not have one on their faces, and you have two arms to hug those who you feel need a hug. You can do so much for others through giving away some money; yet, the only true gift is a portion of thyself (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

I am a quote maniac, so let me please lay a few on you at this time.

“Every charitable act is a stepping stone toward heaven.” –Henry Ward Beecher

“To feel sorry for the needy is not the mark of a Christian, to help them is.” –Frank A. Clark

“We know that God’s arithmetic is somewhat odd. When you subtract by giving away, you get more.” –Archbishop Desmond Tutu

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” –Acts 20:35

“God loveth a cheerful giver.” – 2 Corinthians 9:7

God loves for us to give, if nothing else, by sharing our experiences with others, so that we may help others out by learning from our mistakes. I have found that the more love you put into your daily lives, the more you get back in return.

In closing, my dear friends, I understand I have not been to seminary nor have I gotten a doctorate in theology. Yet, I am just a simple kid who feels that the greatest call God gives us is God’s call to love one another. Let us all go walk out of this church with smiles on our faces, ready to change the world with our love.

AMEN