

“The Lord cares for the stranger,
the Lord sustains the orphan and the widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.” AMEN!

What is wrong with people?

Really, perhaps you find yourself asking
that question a lot lately.

“What in the world is wrong with people?”

Last week, we gathered around a few
school board meetings and heard people
sound off about parental rights to make
the decision whether their child wears
a mask in the classroom.

I kept asking that question,
“What’s wrong with people?”

On a drive to work you encounter traffic lanes
closed up ahead and obviously,
people need to merge to get past
a construction site but no one will
let anyone else in.

What is wrong with people?

When we watch masses of people try
to leave a country in severe turmoil, like
what was happening in Afghanistan,

only to have a suicide bombers come in
and detonate in order to wipe out as
many people as possible.

What is wrong with people?

Climate change denial and discrimination
because a person has black or brown skin,
it is like people have lost their minds.

Are we doomed for a complete collapse of basic morality,
a cessation of equal justice, and an end of sacrificial
love for the other?

Do we really need to be reminded of our capacity
to harm others?

Apparently, the answer is “yes,” we do. (Pause)

You can probably tell that I have been watching
and reading too much news.

It is an unwritten negative side affect when
the doctor orders you to lay on your side for
forty five minutes out of every hour for 5-7 days.

There's not much else to do.

Well, there were better things in retrospect.

An audio book would have been much better, :-)
Quiet meditation and practicing silence.

Missed my chance at that.

For much of my recovery time was fixed on the news. :-)

But, there was something I did
that was really good for me.

I tuned into worship with you all on
my computer last Sunday.

Being a part of this community, even in separation,
was healing.

You all, through music, prayer, reading,
and sermon brought healing to me.

And that is not something that ought to be discounted.

In a time when we can literally make one another sick,
either physically or mentally, we need to know
that people can also promote one another's
physical and mental healing.

You have done this for me.

It was good to be on that side of the screen and
it was great to experience how you all
came together in this place and
broadcast this healing out to the rest of us.

It reminds us at home that
we are agents of healing too.

I am proud of you and the event brought healing
that was needed because thoughtful people
will at one moment wonder
“What is wrong with people?”

And the next begin to consider,
“What is wrong with me?”

In fact, that could be the question that comes
when our health begins to set us back.

When we find ourselves screaming at people
to wear a mask to protect their neighbor.

When we think of better ways to spend our time
or when we look at the injustice and atrocities
in our nation or around the world and want

to do something to help but can't figure out
how or what to do.

We fall down and wonder, “What is wrong with me?”

Maybe, you wonder that, too. (Pause)

You see, our bodies have the potential
to suffer and cause harm.

We are on edge to watch out for dangers that lurk
and I need to own up to what's wrong with me
before I can offer a word of help to those
who are suffering.

To admit my own selfishness,
and short-sighted goals;
to ask for help.

My weakness to not speak up
when others are hurt or segregated.

To realize that when we begin
worship each Sunday confessing our sins.

Corporately expressing out loud the wrongs we do
and the good we do not do.

Grounding ourselves in our humanity and giving
them over to God and getting a clean slate in return,
but not to go on in the same ways.

A clean slate for the purpose of being
opened and set free,
sent and healed.

We will share in that bread and
wine Communion today, too.

That brings healing and opens us up to
receive God's Spirit and grace.

God's Spirit and grace to go, and
then to be healers in the world. (Pause)

We begin to receive that in our word from Isaiah today.

“Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.” (Pause)

The Lord be with you... And also with you.

Today, we receive a message of strength and courage.

We need it.

I need it.

A word that eyes will see,
ears will hear, the injured will leap
and the speechless will sing.

This section of Isaiah was written for
the Israelites exiled in Babylon and beyond.

A message from God to give them
strength and courage,
promise and hope.

You see, exiles and the disabled
are blamed for their positions in life.

Can you imagine a refugee standing at the border
and those on the other side (
the so-called “safe side”)
demand to know
what’s wrong with you?

People who lack ability to see,
the ability to hear or have an inability
to move their bodies like most
must tire from others saying

“something’s wrong with them.

We, you and I, can tell them: nothing -
nothing is wrong with them.

All people fail to see and hear and move as we ought. (Pause)

Turning our eyes now to the gospel,
I want to ask:

What is wrong with you, Jesus?

Really?

You were in Tyre, an Gentile city and
a Gentile woman came to you begging you
to help her daughter.

I get it, you and the disciples were tired.

“Tired in Tyre” maybe that’s
the title of my sermon. :-)

Jesus you wanted to hide away in the house
but you are on this woman’s turf and she begged you
for help to heal her daughter.

And you said, “Let the children be fed first,
for it is not fair to take the children’s food and
throw it to the dogs.”

What were you thinking, Jesus?

What was wrong with you,
for you to say something like that?

I guess we will never know.

But we can't condone it.

I can't save you by saying
you meant cute puppies.

You called her a dog.

It was wrong and offensive.

But we've been there too.

I have said things that were wrong and offensive.

Our words have hurt people.

Today, we get to focus on what this "little" person did.

Mark reminds us that we want to emulate and
be like the "little people" in the gospel.

They are often not even named.

Her words in response to Jesus' offensive remark
began an amazing transformation in Jesus.

We cannot deny it.

He had been quite segregated from those

outside of his culture and religion up to now.

This woman opened Jesus' eyes and
spoke powerful words into his ears and
accelerated his ministry.

After this important event in Tyre,
Jesus became opened
to finally see where God was
calling him to go.

He went to the Decapolis.

Another Gentile region and
performed another healing.

This one included Jesus' physical touch and
we are told he even spat on his hands
and touched the man's tongue.

Then placing his hands in the man's ears
said the word, "Ephphatha."

I love that word and the difficulty
it is for me to say it.

I need to slow down to say it correctly.

"Ephphatha" is a word that sounds
like the breath of God and
it means "be opened."

The breath of God from Jesus

to open the man's ears.

The same breath of God that came
through the Syrophenician woman's response
to Jesus that "even children's crumbs"
from God heal, restore, invite, embrace,
and include all people.

Her words and courage,
the unnamed foreign woman,
transformed Jesus to realize the potential of
his ministry.

Her words pushed Jesus to be opened
to something God had planned all along.

An ever-widening circle and
all-inclusive embrace from God. (Pause)

So, "What's wrong with you?"

Whatever it is be assured
it is nothing that God cannot fix.

Sometimes it is something God's already fixed
but we can't seem to let it go.

God heals every ill;
lights up what is to come and
fills us with hope for tomorrow.

We believe God's mercy triumphs over judgment.

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We believe that, right?

Of course we do.

Let's let our mercy triumph over our judgment, too
and find healing.

AMEN!