

## Physical Ministry or Spiritual Ministry – by Thailer Jimerson

I've got no rhythm. It doesn't matter if I truncate my class from five to four questions or even to my current standard of three, I'm just not going to get to that last question. How to get better at this is beyond me, but the material is still useful so I've decided to share with you in this article.

We were studying that part in Luke 4 where Jesus stands in the synagogue to inaugurate his ministry and to do that he takes the scroll of Isaiah, unwinds it, and reads from Isaiah 61.1-2. It reads,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he sat down and explained that he is the fulfillment of that Scripture. Jesus must have practiced what he preached because then the rest of Luke (and especially in chapters 4 – 10) we see him doing exactly what Isaiah says. Don't miss this: Jesus is actively reversing the effects of sin. He's reversing demonic powers, he's reversing the broken bodies, he's forgiving sins, he's even removing the fruitless toil of work in Luke 5.5 with Peter's fishing! Jesus is inaugurating New Creation, the age of the Lord's Favor, the time of fulfillment.

Here's my question though. What can we take away from Jesus's example?

*Is Jesus concerned with redeeming people from physical bondage or spiritual bondage?*

I think there is this temptation to see it as either/or. There are progressive, mainline protestant churches that seem to put a premium on socially uplifting the oppressed. And there are more fundamental, conservative churches that put a premium on the soul and sharing the gospel.

But I want to challenge you. Jesus doesn't see it as an either/or, but a both/and. And whereas we should make no mistake that the needs of the soul and forgiveness of sins are the matter of most urgency (I even think Luke 5.20-25 means that what mankind needs most is forgiveness, since he grants forgiveness to the paralytic instead of just healing him), we should not be lackadaisical about lifting any physical burden we can either. Because we see the example of this Jesus, we join him in HIS mission, and we remember in Luke 10 (esp. v.9) that Jesus sent his disciples not only to proclaim the kingdom of God BUT ALSO to heal the sick, that chapter 10 is not just the story of the 72 sent to preach and teach, but of the Good Samaritan.

We have to maintain the tension of holding these two together. Even Paul writes in Galatians 6.10, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." He doesn't say *only* to the household of faith, but especially. We're to help *all* but especially our own.

Even so, we should remember the greatest need of the soul. Not that we're subscribing to a type of Greek dualism that says soul is more important than body, no – that's not it. But we put a premium on what is eternal versus what is temporal. So Jesus reminds us, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16.26)