

Matthew 4:23-25

- teaching, preaching and healing -

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Introduction

- ❖ The world is in crisis.
 - There is a political crisis.
 - There is a social crisis.
 - There is a health crisis. There are many sick, and many die because of severe sicknesses. In recent days there have been epidemics caused by the Ebola-virus. The year of 2020 started with a new virus, called corona or Covid-19, which soon became a pandemic and is infecting many people. And in some countries many people have been infected by HIV, leaving many children as orphans, of fatherless. In some African countries, life expectancy is low.
 - Some are commenting on these crises. Like this comment: “God can use these viruses for good because God is good.¹ Contrary to what some are saying, these viruses are not the judgment of God for the sin of the world. Because of God’s great love for us, Jesus bore not only the judgment of God for sin but also our sickness and disease (Isa 53:4; Mt 8:17). Epidemics like the new corona-virus and the flu don’t pass the doors of Christians and good people, nor does cancer and severe chronic diseases. They also fall ill, suffer and eventually die, even at a young age.” See also Ecclesiastes 7:15.
 - “Pain (and sickness) insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (C.S. Lewis)²

¹ Bernock, D. (2020, March 19). Can God Use the Coronavirus for Good? Retrieved from <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/can-god-use-the-coronavirus-for-good.html>

² A quote by C.S. Lewis. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1180-pain-insists-upon-being-attended-to-god-whispers-to-us>

- Each crisis, sickness, pain and death remind us of the “Paradise Lost.”³ (See also Gen 3:19-24.) The creation is suffering. Paul wrote: “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom 8:20-22).
 - We must not reserve this call of God for a worldwide (health) crisis. It is important to remember all those who suffer due to pain, insecurity, despair.
 - Each crisis will reveal what is in the hearts of men: the bad and good reactions; reactions of hope and despair; reactions trust and fear God; reactions of faith and disbelief; reactions of loving care, and alas, abuse; reactions of wisdom, and foolishness.
 - Is God our refuge (Psalm 91)?
 - Do you trust God: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38, 39).
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Matthew. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ Matthew 4:23-25 is part of the initial chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, a summary of the historical background is helpful. When Jesus was preaching, teaching and healing he did this in the power of the **Spirit of God**:
- ❖ The baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:13-17):
 - Before Jesus was baptized by John, he said: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this **to fulfill all righteousness.**”
 - And afterwards: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

³ This is the title of a poem by the 17th-century English poet John Milton (1608–1674). Paradise Lost. (2020, March 13). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost

- The Sermon on the Mount teaches this **fulfilment of all righteousness**. <> “For I tell you that unless **your righteousness surpasses** that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law...” (Mt 5:20).

❖ The preaching of Jesus:

- Jesus had already been preaching in the synagogues in Galilee for some time before he delivered his sermon on the mount. Matthew summarized these sermons as follows:
 - “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt 4:17).
- Jesus continued and took over the ministry of John the Baptist:
 - “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt 3:1–2).
- And later on, when Jesus sends out his twelve disciples:
 - “As you go, preach this message: ‘**The kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt 10:7).
 - After Jesus had called his disciples, he preached the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon will become the basic instruction for the disciples. The sermon will be the core of their teaching (Mt 28:19).
 - These two themes, repentance and the kingdom are prominent in the Sermon on the Mount.

❖ The immediate context shows the following pattern.

Matthew 4:12-17	Jesus returned to Galilee. “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘ Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near ’ (Mt 4:17).
Matthew 4:18-22	Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee. He called the first four disciples . “ Come, follow me! ” (Mt 4:19).
Matthew 4:23-25	“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people ” (Mt 4:23). “ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him ” (Mt 4:25).
Matthew 5:1, 2	“Now when he saw the crowds , he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him , and he began to teach them” (Mt 5:1, 2).

Jesus commissioned his disciples:	
Matthew 10:7, 8	“As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Mt 10:7, 8).

Form and structure

- ❖ The structure of Matthew 4:23-25 is threefold:

<i>Jesus</i> (verse 23)	Jesus went throughout Galilee, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. teaching in their synagogues, 2. preaching the good news of the kingdom, 3. and healing every disease and sickness among the people.
(verse 24)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. News about him spread all over Syria, 2. and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, 3. and he healed them.
(verse 25)	Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

- ❖ It is interesting to note that Matthew uses a variety of geographical regions.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Health and diseases

- ❖ “The New Testament gives no indication that Jesus viewed disease as a form of divine punishment. Rather, he included healing in his ministry as one more means of restoring the divine order of life, to which disease was contrary (cf. Luke 4:18). On account of semantic difficulties and lack of precise technical description, only the most general identification can be made of most diseases depicted in the Old Testament. Those

which Jesus encountered include such common afflictions as blindness, paralysis, leprosy, and mental disorders.”⁴

Geography (see map below)

- ❖ Galilea. Nazareth (Mt 2:19-23; 4:13). Capernaum (Mt 4:13; 8:4-17; 17:24-18:35), which was his town (9:1); The towns of Galilee (Mt 11:1)
- ❖ Syria. When Matthew wrote his gospel, the region Trachonitis belonged to the Roman Province of Syria. Jesus has visited this region, the region of Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:13). Probably the mount of the Sermon on the Mount was located at the Syrian side of the Sea of Galilea.
- ❖ Decapolis: Region of Gadarenes (Mt 8:28-34).
- ❖ The region across the Jordan; The other side of the Jordan (Mt 19:1-20:16).
- ❖ Judea: Bethlehem (Mt 2:1-18). Desert of Judea and the river Jordan (Mt 3:1-17; John the Baptist; Mt 4:1-11).
- ❖ Jerusalem.

⁴ Myers, A. C. (1987, p. 285).

PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF JESUS

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Figure 1A map of Palestine in the time of the gospels.

Word-studies

- ❖ Teach = “**διδάσκω**”:
 - 2. **to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting**, *teach*.⁵ Teaching in the synagogues was in a formal situation.
- ❖ Preach = “**κηρύσσω**”:
 - 1. **to make an official announcement**, *announce, make known*, by an official herald or one who functions as such.
 - 2. **to make public declarations**, *proclaim aloud*.⁶
- ❖ Heal = “**θεραπεύω**”:
 - 2. **heal, restore**.⁷ (Mt 4:24; 8:7, 16; 10:8; 12:15, 22; 14:14; 15:30; 17:16, 18; 19:2; 21:14.)
 - This means ‘he healed them’, not ‘he treated them medically’. Compare Mk 1:34. See on 4:23 for the verb, which in the gospels usually connotes mercy and compassion.⁸

Exposition

General

- ❖ This short narrative describes weeks, perhaps months of the ministry of Jesus. There are some differences between the ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist.
 - The main message is the same: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt 3:1 and Mt 4:17).
 - John was **preaching** in the desert of Judea.
 - Jesus was **teaching**, **preaching** and **healing** in Galilee.

Verse 23 *Jesus went throughout Galilee:*

- ❖ “**went**”. This is the main verb. Jesus was walking from village to town. And while he went throughout Galilee, he did three things: teaching, preaching and healing.
 - “**teaching in their synagogues,**” (1)

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 241).

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 543).

⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 453).

⁸ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 418).

- **“preaching the good news of the kingdom,”** (2)
- **“and healing every disease and sickness among the people.”** (3)

Compare Matthew 9:35 and 11:1:

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues (1), preaching the good news of the kingdom (2) and healing every disease and sickness.” (3)

- “After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach (1) and preach (2) in the towns of Galilee.”
- Newman and Stine comment: *“Teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people* is repeated word for word in 9:35. Therefore several scholars conclude that these two verses summarize the contents of chapters 5–9. If this conclusion is valid, then chapters 5–7 may be said to tell of the Messiah’s teaching ministry and chapters 8–9 of his healing ministry.”⁹
- ❖ **“teaching in their synagogues,”** (1) This was probably a formal setting in which the teacher was teaching about and commenting on the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17), especially the Law. Galilee was rather densely populated. Therefore, it is feasible that several synagogues were found in this region. Some are mentioned in the Bible, notably the synagogues of Capernaum and Nazareth.
 - “Any Jewish man capable of teaching was permitted to do so in the synagogue.”¹⁰
 - After Jesus had finished the Sermon on the mount, the people compared him with their teachers of the Law: “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” (See also Mt 22:33).
 - The teaching of Jesus contained new and old treasures from the Old Testament: “He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”
 - His teaching revealed godly wisdom (treasures in heaven; Mt 6:20, 21). “Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?’ they asked” (Mt 13:54).
- ❖ **“preaching the good news of the kingdom,”** = “As you go, preach this message: **‘The kingdom of heaven is near’**” (Mt 10:7). It is good news because:
 - Light will shine in the darkness: “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Mt

⁹ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 98).

¹⁰ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 99).

4:16; Isa 9: 1, 2).

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.” (Mt 12:18-21 = Isa 42:1-4).

And:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk 4:18, 19; Isa 61:1, 2; Also: Mt 11: 5, 6).

- “**the kingdom**” is near:
 - After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, “Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:18-20). He is truly Immanuel.
- ❖ The Gospel of Matthew refers especially to the prophecies of Isaiah to make clear that Jesus Christ preached the good news of the kingdom:
 - Matthew 1:23 + Isaiah 7:14: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”
 - Matthew 3:3 + Isaiah 40:3: “A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”” See also Matthew 11:10 + Malachi 3:1.
 - Matthew 4:16 + Isaiah 9:2: “the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”
 - This citation possibly reminded the people also of Isaiah 9:6, 7: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”
 - Matthew 8:17 + Isaiah 53:4: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.”
 - Matthew 12:17-21 + Isaiah 42:1-4: “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations” (Isa 40:1).
 - Matthew 13:15 + Isaiah 6:10 as a warning: “For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” See also Matthew 15:7 + Isaiah 29:13.

- Also Luke 4:18, 19 + Isaiah 61:1, 2: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because **he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”** (See also Mt 11:5.)
- ❖ **“and healing”**
 - This reminds of the Exodus:
 - “He said, ‘If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for **I am the Lord, who heals you**” (Ex 15:26; Dt 7:15; See also Ps 103: 1-6).
 - **Jesus Christ identified himself with the sick and needy (Mt 25:40).**

Verse 24

- ❖ As a result, three things happen:
 - **“News about him spread all over Syria,”**
 - Jesus was working in Galilee. People were talking about Jesus. Syria is on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.
 - This was among the Jews.
 - **“and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases,”**
 - This doesn’t mean that all the people living in Syria came to Jesus but those who reacted to news about him. And they brought to him all who were ill.
 - Medical knowledge was very limited. “And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, **but no one could heal her.**”
 - **“those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed.”** Davis and Allison state that this list is an elaboration of **“various diseases.”** This is preferable because the distinction between mundane and supernatural illness was scarcely hard and fast in antiquity.¹¹ There is no need to diagnose these different afflictions and relate these to modern diseases (See above). This narrative gives a summary of what happened. The focus is on the next words:
 - **“and he healed them.”** Jesus healed them with no exception. “There is no sickness or weakness which Jesus cannot master. This is the basic thought in all the stories of His healings.”¹²
 - Once a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus. He healed him so that he could both talk and see. And then Jesus

¹¹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 418).

¹² Beyer, H. W. (1964–, p. 130).

said: “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

- “The result of the intervention of Jesus is always that the sick person is fully cured even though he has been sick from birth or for many years. As the Bringer of the age of salvation Jesus is the great Physician.”¹³ Healing is a sign of the nearness of the kingdom of God.
- Matthew narrated more detailed about healings in other stories. Although the cause of “demon-possession” has not a known medical background, but is “spiritual”, the effect of what Jesus did is “healing”:
 - “Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment” (Mt 17:18).
- “Jesus proved by His miracles that He was able **to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease**; thereby confirming His word. But **the ultimate aim of these miracles was the manifestation of Jesus Himself, and of the kingdom of heaven**, whereby the kingdom of darkness was vanquished.”¹⁴
- Matthew doesn’t mention a possible relation between sin and sickness, which is theologically speaking a difficult relation. See John 9:1-3.

Verse 25

- ❖ “Large crowds ... followed him.” These crowds are distinguished from the disciples (Mt 5:1, 2). See also Matthew 8:1; 14:13; 15:30; 19:2.
 - “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36).
 - “Jesus’ miracle-working understandably attracts crowds, but those in the crowds will need to be instructed on what true discipleship involves if they are to become genuine followers.”¹⁵
- ❖ Note that Samaria is not listed among the regions.

Application

Warning and advice

¹³ Beyer, H. W. (1964–, p . 130).

¹⁴ Lange, J. P., & Schaff, P. (2008, p. 96).

¹⁵ Blomberg, C. (1992, p. 22).

- ❖ When confronted with a severe crisis, like a health crisis, be wise, be careful, listen to the medical doctors, and follow up their directions.

Listen to Jesus Sirach:

“Honor the physician with the honor due him, according to your need of him, for the Lord created him; for healing comes from the Most High, and he will receive a gift from the king.

The skill of the physician lifts up his head, and in the presence of great men he is admired.

The Lord created medicines from the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them. Was not water made sweet with a tree in order that his power might be known? And he gave skill to men that he might be glorified in his marvelous works. By them he heals and takes away pain; the pharmacist makes of them a compound. His works will never be finished; and from him health is upon the face of the earth. My son, when you are sick do not be negligent, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you” (Sir 38:1-9).

“And give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; let him not leave you, for there is need of him. There is a time when success lies in the hands of physicians, for they too will pray to the Lord that he should grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life” (Sir 38:12-14).

- ❖ When preaching on this text, don’t try to identify the diseases and demon-possession with modern-day diseases and afflictions. The main point in verse 24 is that Jesus healed all who were brought to him with no exception. This healing is a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is near.

- The ministry of healing is a difficult subject and must be taught with the utmost prudence.

Praise

- ❖ Praise Christ revealing himself teaching and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom.
- ❖ Praise Christ because he is the true healer of every sickness and infirmity.
- ❖ Praise Christ because he died for our sins, and resurrected on the third day.
- ❖ Praise Christ and worship him because he is truly Immanuel God with us.
 - He is our refuge amidst all kinds of crises.

Verse 23-25

- ❖ Explain that teaching and preaching are the main task of the church and trust God that, while seeking the Kingdom of God and its righteousness (Mt 6:33), he will guide the church in all other aspects.
 - Michael Green wrote: “Teaching is directed primarily towards informing the mind; preaching towards reaching the will.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Green, M. (2001, p. 86).

- ❖ Explain why the good news of the Kingdom is really good news. Use the references to the prophecies of Isaiah.
 - Good News because the relation between God, the Father and his children will be restored.
 - People will experience shalom, the wholeness of life, where life will be restored.
 - It is the Kingdom of God’s righteousness, forgiveness, grace and mercy. It is Kingdom where peace will reign and we will see God.
- ❖ Gift of healing. Jesus didn’t give all the spiritual gift of healing (1 Cor 12:9; note the word “another”).

Called to follow

- ❖ Stress the point, that we too are called to follow Jesus, not because of his healings, but because of his teaching and preaching.
 - Studying his word and put them into practice (Mt 7:24-27).

Take these words to heart

- ❖ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Mt 25:31-40).

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