Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Mediator and Redeemer Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Dear Baptized,

It is most certainly true that Christ Jesus, true God and true man, has come into this world to defeat the unholy trinity of sin, death and the devil. It is also most certainly true that Jesus the Christ has done this. This is the Gospel. But wait, there’s more. The holy prophet, Isaiah, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote that our Redeemer, the Incarnate Son of God “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4); that is, "He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17).

Thus, from of old the Christian ponders all these things – psalming them in the meditations of the soul and singing the Gospel aloud from the mouth . . .

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His Holy Name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's” (Psalm 103:1-5).

The Church repeats this sounding joy in her hymnody, singing, as we just have . . .

‘Tis He forgives thy sins; ‘Tis He relieves thy pain;
‘Tis He that heals thy sicknesses And makes thee young again. (TLH #27, st. 3)

The devil is defeated in the garden and in the desert. Sin is atoned for in the Son’s Circumcision and Sacrifice. Death is conquered in the Incarnation and the Resurrection. And what of physical afflictions, diseases, tumors, leprosy, consumption and yellow fever? Follow Jesus and find out. In His earthly ministry we find Him not only forgiving sins, but also taking sicknesses and diseases away from people. Those diseases no longer belong to them: they now are the possession of Jesus. What does He do with them? Follow Jesus and find out. In the journey to the Place of the Skull Jesus has them; in the darkness of the mid-day night He has taken them to the cross. On Easter morning, not only has death been defeated, not only is the devil bound, not only have all sins been paid for, but also, the diseases, afflictions and plagues of the earth are gone from Jesus as far as the east is
But that is getting a bit ahead of the Gospel Reading for today; a text in time when our Lord is on His way to our cross. So this morning we follow Jesus and behold Him taking an affliction away from someone and causing a Resurrection in its wake. Please listen to that portion of the holy, inerrant, inspired, efficacious Word of God and hear that there is . . .

“Good News for Mothers-in-Law and Other Sick People”

“And immediately He (Jesus) left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told Him of her. And He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them. That evening, at sundown, they brought to Him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And He healed many who were sick with various diseases.”

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

Physical afflictions of all sorts – whether they be diseases, plagues, aches, pains or this “owy” or that – are all offshoots of the Fall into sin and consequences of sin entering the world through one man. Oft times such afflictions are our own fault. The abuse of God’s gift of alcohol might lead to a liver disease that ends a woman’s life in her fortieth year. It does no good for a man who worked outside without a shirt to say that medical science didn’t know anything about sunlight causing skin cancer forty years ago. That cancer still kills.

Now, granted, not all physical afflictions have their origins in a particular action or lack of action on the part of the individual himself or herself. Consider tumors in children or the little girl who died of the bird flu because she cared for her pet chicken. Then there is a teenager named Matthew in ICU in Missouri who has an injured brain stem as a result of an automobile accident. As he is afflicted physically, so are his parents suffering. Whatever the severity, source or situation, such physical afflictions, ailments, injuries and conditions are of the Law and are reminders that life in this fallen world will end one day. Sometimes those reminders whisper – at other times they shout. Regardless, they are messengers of the Law in a world of hurt, whether it be a bit of a headache or pancreatic cancer.

A child with a little headache now, might mean that the parents, in an hour or so, will be rushing him to the hospital with spinal meningitis, and that the pastor, in a day or so, will be preparing a funeral sermon for a little one called home. There’s no such thing as “a slight fever.”

“Now Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told Him (Jesus) of her. And He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them.”

This woman was like all men; that is, like each man, each woman, each teen, each child and each infant – diseased in body and soul. She was, just as each and all are, unable to come to Jesus. He must come to her. Jesus does. She has a fever and who knows whether or not it is unto death? Jesus knows. One might say, “It’s a fever; live with it.” It’s just as correct to say, “It’s a fever; die with it.” Either way, God knows. Jesus would not have it be so for this woman, known simply as the mother
of Peter’s wife. But with Jesus present with her, she is not only a mother-in-law, but a mother-in-
Grace. She could not come to Jesus; the Savior came to her.

O dear Christian, the LORD God, Who is with you alway, is even more so with you on the day of
your afflictions. Though you walk, or crawl, or cry out in the valley of the shadow of death, He is
with you, for “He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5). The
“valley” is this fallen world; “death” is the deliverance from it. Therefore, it’s those awful shadows
that plague us – the deadly night shades of sickness and the darkness of suffering and the gnawing,
consequent pains of body and soul. Amidst his shadows David psalmed, “Out of the depths I cry
unto Thee, O LORD! Lord, hear my voice” (Psalm 130:1). So also, the Church congregates and
implores God, hymning what Martin Luther wrote:

From depths of woe I cry to Thee, Lord, hear me I implore Thee.
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me, My prayer let come before Thee.
If Thou rememb’rest each misdeed, If each should have its rightful meed.
Who may abide Thy presence? (TLH #329, st. 1)

Into the abode of a sick one came the Savior. Could that home abide the Presence of the holy,
almighty, LORD of Hosts? O Lord God, “enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight
shall no man living be justified” (Psalm 143:2). But behold, I bring you Good News of a great joy,
for Jesus has extended the hand of God and took the woman’s feverish hand. He, in Whose hands are
the deep places of the earth, extends His hand here to take the fever from her; He extends that same
hand on the cross beam to bear our sicknesses. Under the crown of thorns, the scouring whip and the
crucifying spike, Jesus deals with all our sicknesses, for it is most certainly true that “He was
wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was
upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53).

Although all sins have been atoned for and despite the truth that you are forgiven of all of them in
the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost, still sins continue – so also all
sicknesses, though they still plague us, they have been taken care of and have received their limit.
They are not permitted to trouble us beyond this life. Or do you not remember that God did not want
our diseases and sicknesses and illnesses to vex us eternally – that He did not want us to live forever
with cancer such that it would always consume and never kill? Recall what the Holy Trinity said
“now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever”
(Genesis 3:22). Thus Adam and Eve were escorted from the Garden of Eden.

But there’s another part to this episode of expulsion. God wills that sicknesses have a limit. That
limit is in this life. Or do you not remember what Jesus said to Mary and Martha concerning the
sickness of Lazarus? The two sisters sent unto Jesus, saying ‘‘Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is
sick.’ When Jesus heard that, He said, ‘This sickness is not unto death, but for the Glory of God, that
the Son of God might be glorified thereby’’ (John 11:3-4). Your sickness, O Christian, is not unto
death – not unto everlasting death.

Last week an email was sent out on to a couple of groups of people – one to a group of fellow
pastors and the other to people throughout the world on a sermon list. The emails invited each to
reply with the name of a particular disease, affliction, condition, etc. These, along with afflictions
suffered among the members of this little flock here in Emmett, Idaho, would be referred to in this
sermon that you are hearing or reading today. Beyond the common ordinary colds and aches, the list
was staggering and it will be read in a few moments.

But before that reading, dearly beloved, please know this: Your sickness, disease, affliction, pain and/or condition, at worst, will plague you only as far as your last breath here in this life – until your last heart-beat in this vale of tears. With the cross Jesus drew a line in the dust of the earth and said, “No farther.”

With Jesus speaking the Word, Lazarus was raised from the dead. With Jesus taking the feverish hand of Peter’s mother-in-law, she too experienced a resurrection and was relieved of her fever in this life. Is there a promise from God that it will be so for you today, or tomorrow, or the day before your death? No. Could you be healed? Yes, for it might just be a slight fever which will break and from which you will recover, or perhaps the surgical team will be able to remove the entire tumor, or maybe a cure will be discovered tomorrow, or a new medicine will be able to treat the condition! Maybe; maybe not. Who knows? Jesus knows. Is there a promise from God that you will be healed of all your pains, diseases, ailments and sicknesses? Yes, for as has been said, these may not cross the line at the end of your life. You will enter eternity and Paradise without them.

There is the humorous quip about a multi-millionaire who died and at the funeral someone asked, “How much did he leave behind?” The reply was, “All of it. He left it all behind.” Let’s change that a bit and make the application that is part of God’s Good News. A Christian, plagued with many diseases and much suffering, afflicted with broken bones and a de-generating condition, departed this life. At the funeral someone asked, “How much did he leave behind?” The reply was, “All of it. He left it all behind.” What are some of these conditions that will not accompany the faithful into eternity? Here are but a few of them listed in the emails . . .

Ear and balance issues, lateral epicondylitis, eye afflictions, chronic atrial fibrillation, overweight, acid reflux, acute asthma, lymphocytic leukemia, diabetes, arthritic knees and hips, bursitis, a man with 137 kidney stones and still counting, chronic pain, life after Dengue hemorrhagic Fever, a degenerative spinal disease called facet arthropathy, kidney disease, back pain from disk problems, multiple recurring benign parotid tumors, psoriatic arthritis, coronary and peripheral artery disease, obstructive sleep apnea, cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, laminitis, arthritis, degenerative nerve disease, neuropathy, various skin diseases, hypertension, cardiac pain, alopecia, low pressure glaucoma, Alzheimer’s Disease, familial tremor, after-effects of the West Nile Virus, juvenile-onset diabetes, polycystic kidney disease, Crohn’s Disease, prostate cancer.

These, and a legion of others, will be gone – and in the Resurrection the Lord God “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Philippians 3:21). So, now what is to be done between now and then? What are we to do with the life, the strength and the abilities we do have left to us? Indeed, let us, first of all, return to the text to discover what our charges are. Mark writes: “Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay sick with a fever, and immediately they told Him (Jesus) of her. And He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them.”

She served them. Our charge now is two-fold. Faith toward God and fervent love for one another. This is the life of the Christian – faith and love. We receive from God above and we distribute to our neighbor below. Peter’s mother-in-law served those who were in the house where Jesus was present. We all, here at Our Redeemer, would do well to do the same, making certain that what was needed
here for the Ministry of the Word to continue to have free course here, and to be preached and taught to the joy and edifying of Christ’s people would be supplied, and that it would continue until each of us is called home by the Lord. Our serving extends beyond the walls of this sanctified building, the parsonage next door and the church grounds. Therefore, “as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith” (Galatians 6:10). Then may the House wherein Jesus is present be a place where the sin-sick and the bodily-afflicted may come to hear the Good News of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Christ, just as, that day long ago when the congregation grew; that is when, on “that evening, at sundown, they brought to Him (Jesus) all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And He healed many who were sick with various diseases.”

Dearly beloved, may it be for us as it was for the Christian Church in the days of Isaiah the Prophet who wrote: “I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the House of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses. For He said, ‘Surely they are My people, children that will not lie’ – so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:7-9). Amen.