

Sunday 14 January 2024 Epiphany 2

10am Cooma

Hymn - The King of love

**The King of love my Shepherd is
Whose goodness faileth never
I nothing lack if I am His And He is mine forever**

**Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth
And where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth**

**Perverse and foolish oft I strayed
But yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid and home rejoicing brought me**

**In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee dear Lord beside me
Thy rod and staff my comfort still Thy cross before to guide me**

**Thou spread'st a table in my sight
Thy unction grace bestoweth
And O what transport of delight from Thy pure chalice floweth**

**And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never
Good Shepherd may I sing Thy praise within Thy house forever**

The Grace

of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.

And also with you.

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Lord have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.

Sentence of the Day

But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Mark 2:10,11

Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and
worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Saving God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, healed the sick and brought them wholeness of body and mind: inspire us, his disciples, so that we may constantly proclaim his gospel by our words and by the dedication and integrity of our lives; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-46

13 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, **2** “When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease,[a] they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons[b] who is a priest. **3** The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean. **45** “Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt,[c] cover the lower part of their face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ **46** As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalms 139:1-5, 12-18

1 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.

5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!

18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

Acts 3:11-16

11 While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. **12** When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? **13** The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **14** You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **15** You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. **16** By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

Mark 1:35–2:12

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. **36** Simon and his companions went to look for him, **7** and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” **39** So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." 41 Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon

Question Time

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Christ Jesus, intercede for us, and in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Scripture Sentence

Jesus said: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. John 13.34

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.

Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn - O Christ the Healer

O Christ, the healer, we have come
to pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored
when reached by love that never ends?

From every ailment flesh endures
our bodies clamour to be freed;
yet in our hearts we would confess
that wholeness is our deepest need.

How strong, O Lord, are our desires,
how weak our knowledge of ourselves!
Release in us those healing truths
unconscious pride resists or shelves.

In conflicts that destroy our health
we diagnose the world's disease;
our common life declares our ills:
is there no cure, O Christ for these?

Grant that we all, made one in faith,
in your community we find
the wholeness that, enriching us,
shall reach the whole of humankind.

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Great Thanksgiving

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

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

The Holy Communion

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord

Grape juice is available.

Please come to the Communion Rail if you are able, observing appropriate social distancing.

After Communion

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen

Notices

Hymn - I will sing the wondrous story

**1 I will sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
how he left the realms of glory
for the cross on Calvary.**

Refrain:

**Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
sing it with the saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.**

**2 I was lost: but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray,
raised me up and gently led me
back into the narrow way. [Refrain]**

**3 Faint was I, and fears possessed me,
bruised was I from many a fall,
hope was gone, and shame distressed me:
but his love has pardoned all. [Refrain]**

**4 Days of darkness still may meet me,
sorrow's path I oft may tread;
but his presence still is with me,
by his guiding hand I'm led. [Refrain]**

**5 He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet:
then he'll bear me safely over,
where the loved ones I shall meet. [Refrain]**

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Sermon - Jesus Heals

Introduction

Today we are continuing our series on Mark's gospel. Last week, in my first sermon, we looked at the start of Jesus's ministry, how there are some parallels to the way I started my career, and what we could learn about our ministries, which every Christian is, or should be involved in. Of course, I am not Jesus, and you are not Jesus, but like Jesus, we should be letting the world know about the kingdom of God, and helping people to be part of that Kingdom, which they can only do through faith in Jesus's death and resurrection on our behalf.

Today we are looking at the next few paragraphs in Mark, chapter 1:21 to 2:12. You will note we are looking at quite a large amount of text in each sermon, but this is very deliberate. Firstly, it helps us to look at the big picture of Mark, the big themes, and secondly, it means we will work our way through the entire gospel of Mark between now and about ANZAC Day or so. Since I want to look at Jesus's death and resurrection narratives over Easter, I will bring those sermons forward a few weeks, but otherwise we will work through the gospel in order.

I have given you all a sheet with all the Bible readings for each of the sermons in the series, and it would be really helpful if you could read through the readings during the week before each sermon. This will give you a better idea of the details that I might only touch briefly or even skip over, and it might leave you with questions that I may not touch at all. If, after listening to my sermon, you feel your burning questions haven't been answered, then there will be an opportunity to ask questions of me after the sermon, and I will try to answer them. Alternatively, you can ask me after the service, or email them to me at office@coomaanglican.org.au

Today we are looking at Mark 1:21-2:12. This may seem a strange way to break up Mark, but I have tried to do it so the sections have unifying themes, which today is Jesus healing people and freeing them from evil spirits

Let's start by thinking about what healing is.

Healing

According to dictionaries, healing is the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again, or free from injury or disease. A disease is any harmful deviation from a normal structural or functional state. These definitions assume there is a state that things should be in - the normal state: soundness, wholeness or healthiness, and that state gets corrupted by disease. Healing is restoring the body, mind or spirit back to that healthy state.

God has made all things, and has made them good, so the normal state should be good. He created a world that would be the perfect place for you and me to live in our bodies, doing our work, living in community with one another and with him, and with his Son and with the Spirit. He had created it carefully, meticulously, beautifully, with loving care, and the constant refrain in the Creation narrative in Genesis chapter 1 is that "God saw that it was good." But then came sin, horribly corrupting his work with disease. And that is what disease is, the consequence of sin corrupting God's perfect creation. Healing is removing a small part of that corruption, restoring the perfection that God intended.

When we look at our passage today, we see lots of different diseases: impure spirits, demon possession, fevers, sickness, paralysis and leprosy. Each of these is a corruption of God's perfect creation.

Impure spirits and demon possession

The first two examples, impure spirits and demon possession, are situations where people cannot control their bodies or their minds the way they are supposed to. The people of Jesus's day did not have the medical knowledge we now have, so what appeared to them as demon possession may in some cases be what we know and understand as epilepsy, or a mental or psychological illness (such as psychosis or schizophrenia) or brain damage. However, there is also no doubt that evil spirits do exist, and can control unwilling subjects, like the man in their synagogue. He (or rather the spirit in him) cried out, ²⁴ *"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"*

Mark records that Jesus sternly commanded the demons and spirits to "Come out of him!" and it came out of him with a shriek. He also drove out many other demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. I'll come back to why he didn't want this news to get out later in the sermon.

Fevers and sickness

Jesus also healed people with what sound to us like more mundane diseases: fevers and sickness. Simon Peter's mother in law was stuck in bed with a fever, and when Jesus healed her, she immediately got up and waited on them. While there is no way I would have expected my dear departed mother in law to wait on me, especially when she had just been healed, but it was what Peter's mother in law wanted to do. This episode shows the way that disease prevents people from doing the things they normally do (like providing hospitality as was expected in that culture), rather than any reflection of Jesus's treatment of women.

In fact, all sicknesses, all fevers, prevent us from doing the things we should do, or even want to do. Even simple colds can stop us from going to work, from mixing with relatives and friends, and even recreational activities. Even more severe illnesses can stop these good things on a permanent basis, and this is part of the reason why Jesus healed so many people of them.

Leprosy

The next disease that Jesus healed that I want to talk about this morning is leprosy. Today we know that there is a specific disease known as Hansen's disease caused by a bacteria that causes skin lesions and nerve endings to die. In Biblical times leprosy was a kind of generic term for what are known as defiling skin diseases that were so contagious that lepers had to be kept away from everyone else, and specifically from the temple, as we read in our Old Testament reading today.

Because of this, when Jesus encountered a man suffering from leprosy, he was indignant (literally angry), or in some other translations, filled with compassion. This is because the leper was suffering a triple whammy of disease - physical pain and disability, cut off from people, and cut off from God and the temple. This is definitely NOT the way Jesus had created his perfect world, and boy, was he angry. Some people have suggested that Jesus' anger was as a result of the man asking him if he were willing to make him clean. In Jesus's situation, you or I might feel justified in retorting, "Willing, of course I'm willing! How could anyone who is about to go through what I'm about to go through on the cross not be willing. How could I possibly be half hearted when I'm about to die the most agonising death imaginable so the whole world is made clean? How could you even question my willingness?" Fortunately, Jesus is much more gracious than I am and healed the man with just a word, without giving him the earful I would have!

Like with the demons, Jesus also didn't want the healed leper to advertise the fact he was healing people, I promise I will get to this point soon!

Paralysis

Perhaps the primary example of disease preventing people from doing the things they need to do is paralysis. The paralyzed man has lost the use of his limbs, and could not even walk to work or for the basic necessities of life, cleaning and feeding himself. His friends had to carry him everywhere, which must have not only been a great inconvenience to them and himself, it must have been a great embarrassment to him, having to rely on his friends and family for everything.

It is important also to see how Jesus reinforces the link that I have been making between sin and disease as he heals the paralytic. Jesus starts by saying to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." From the paralytic's perspective, this may have seemed like a letdown. He was probably less worried about his sins than his paralysis at that point, and probably disappointed that Jesus didn't seem keen to heal the paralysis. Jesus, of course, knew that the man's sins were vastly more important than his paralysis.

As I have mentioned, sin is ultimately responsible for all the disease in the world. Note carefully that he is not saying any specific sin of the man caused his paralysis, or that any specific sin of ours specifically causes any particular disease that we might suffer from. While there may sometimes be a direct link between specific sins and disease (for example, self-injecting illicit drugs with dirty needles can cause blood diseases), he *WAS* saying that there was no disease in the world before sin entered, and when sin came, so did disease and death.

The teachers of the Jewish law understood that ridding the world of disease and death, and the forgiveness of sin, was only possible for God. All sin offends God, is ultimately against God, and that is why they accused Jesus of blaspheming when he said he forgave the man's sins. They also knew that it was easy to claim that the man had been forgiven, as there was no outward physical evidence, but healing the man of paralysis would be indisputable. Jesus of course did both, in healing providing an obvious sign that the teachers could not deny.

The man, got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all, Jesus said this showed the teachers that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, that only God could do. The expression Son of Man, in the language of the day, usually meant "I, myself" as in "But I want you to know that I, myself, have authority on earth to forgive sins". However, it would also mean another, specific person, and in the Old Testament it's a rather unusual expression found in Daniel 7:13 (NIV), There, Belshazzar, king of Babylon, tells the prophet Daniel about a dream he' had. He says: 13 *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

Its reasonably obvious that Jesus is saying that he himself is this Son of Man, and giving a very strong hint as to his divine nature. After all, it's not everyone that God, the ancient of Days, gives *authority, glory and sovereign power; that all nations and peoples of every language worship, has an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and a kingdom that will never be destroyed.*

If you take a look at Mat 26:64, the High Priest really does get it during Jesus's trials, when He says to Jesus, *"I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."* Jesus replied.⁶⁴ *"You have said so," "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."* At this,⁶⁵ *Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What do you think?" and they answered "He is worthy of death,"* Matthew 26:63-66

The High Priest, and the people around him understood that Jesus was the foulest blasphemer imaginable, unless of course He was telling the truth! The High Priest however, was never going to accept that, despite the evidence that Jesus had given of healing unhealable diseases and forgiving sins only God could forgive. We, of course, have to make up our minds for ourselves.

Jesus's priorities

I now want to look at Jesus's priorities, and finally get onto why he didn't want to advertise. You may also have noticed that Jesus seems a little reticent to do all the healing people wanted him to do.

Healing so many people did not fit his ministry priorities. His priority was to preach and teach. He went into the synagogue in verse 21 to teach, and only cast out the impure spirit when it challenged him.

He could also have had many more customers if he'd let the demons, and the healed leper, advertise what he could do, but he wouldn't let them. The publicity he got when people did talk meant that he was constantly crowded by people who wanted to be healed, and he had trouble getting time alone to rest and pray to his heavenly Father, or to preach, which was his highest priority.

He wanted to preach in towns and synagogues where people had the opportunity to hear him without the distraction of the great unwashed crowds. He still wanted to heal people of the disease that was corrupting his creation, but for Jesus, the priority was preaching who he was, and his role in bringing about the coming kingdom.

Ultimately his bringing about God's kingdom would remove more disease and restore more of the world than healing as many as he could possibly heal ever could. Time and distance would restrict the number he could heal to a few hundreds at most, and yet as people understood the gospel of the kingdom of God and gained their salvation untold millions would be saved. The whole world would be restored to the way it should be, with sin completely eradicated. There would be no more disease, no more suffering, nothing else that needing healing. All this will happen when he returns in glory, and so his priority was to teach people about that coming kingdom rather than heal the relatively few people he could at that time. That is his priority.

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, what does this teach us? What does it teach us as we live out our Christians lives in this fallen, disease ridden world?

That fact is, that this world is fallen - it is riddled with sin and disease, and while we may get the occasional glimpses of the beauty and goodness that the creator intended, it will always be corrupted until Jesus returns. There will always be wars and rumours of wars, the poor will always be with us, we will all continue to get old and physically and mentally decay. This is all due to the sin that entered the world when Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil that they had been commanded not to eat of in the Garden of Eden.

Like Jesus, our response to this fallen world should work in the long and short terms.

Christians need to combat sin in this world with every means at our disposal. There are many great programs that seek to destroy the diseases that plague us, by prevention as well as medical cures, to alleviate poverty and its causes - corruption, greed, as well as so called natural factors - famine and plagues. Some of these are run by Christians, and many by non-Christians, but most are doing some good in this world, and are worthwhile your support, financially and by other means.

Many of us are able and called to personally act to relieve suffering through our own, God empowered efforts, particularly with those who are suffering in our communities around us. We heard last week how we can support the Salvation Army with their Christmas lunch and other efforts that are making a difference in Cooma and the wider Monaro.

Even if our personal capabilities are limited, we can all devote ourselves to prayer for those who are suffering, for those who are trying to help, and that God might intervene to bring the healing and restoration required.

But also like Jesus, we need to understand that the only complete healing this world will ever see will only come about when Jesus returns, bringing about God's perfect kingdom, perfectly restored to the way it was intended in the Garden of Eden, with God, creation and humankind in perfect harmony without sin. The Bible tells us that this will happen, but also that God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but for all who will enter the kingdom to come to repentance. We have our part to play in this to speed its coming by spreading the knowledge of the kingdom, sharing the gospel of salvation by Jesus's death in our place and resurrection, and helping people to repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus worked for the coming of the king in both these ways, healing the diseases and sufferings of this world, as preaching repentance for salvation in the kingdom to come. Will you join him to restore this fallen world to the perfection it was always meant to be?