

Sick and Tired. Monday, February 12, 2008

I've been hit with a migraine recently, followed by pneumonia and then a broken tooth. I'm frankly sick and tired. This falls in well with some of the themes of the Lenten season which we have just entered. Not that I've tried to get sick and tired. In Lent, we are encouraged to give up something, or simply fast, to become aware of our need for the Lord, and to practice self-denial. Some of us need to practice self-denial and the giving up of caffeine, television, sweets, alcohol or rich foods. Fasting is a helpful tradition, which tests our loyalties and asks the essential question, "Do you love the Lord more than chocolate?" Or whatever you need to put in place of the word chocolate.

The prophet Jeremiah says it well in chapter 17, starting with verse 5 "This is what the Lord says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. 6 That one will be like a bush in the wastelands; that person will not see prosperity when it comes. That person will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. 7 "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. 8 They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? 10 "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."

We have a cardiac condition and most of us don't know it. We have a sin-sick heart which has a tendency to self-preoccupation and self-importance. Our hearts are so dysfunctional that we don't notice the sickness until some crisis comes into our lives, often in the form of someone we care about having a crisis because of our lack, and our insensitivity.

The cure for the cardiac condition requires us to turn away from the well traveled ruts of our depending on our own strength, abilities and resources, and turning to trust the Lord's. The desert is a place where we come to the intimate knowledge of our inabilities, pride and self-righteousness. It is a dry and thirsty place. We are blinded by thinking we are more than we are. We believe we are in control. But control is a mirage in the desert of self.

Let us turn to the Lord today as we consider how sick and tired we truly are. Stay with me this week as we consider what God is calling us to consider in the desert of self-preoccupation.

Sick and tired. Tuesday, February 13, 2008.

Tomorrow is the day we like to think about love, but today I'm encouraging each of us to think more about how sick we are. Heart sick. Because we often forget how self-preoccupied and self-important we tend to be. Even love turns out to be more about us than about the object of our affections. Welcome to the lonely, heart sick desert of the soul.

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This desert blinds our eyes to the prosperity and potential we all have. We have the resources of Almighty God at our hands. We have so much in health, energy, and life. And even if you're like me and have a disease for the time being, God himself is with you if you but call out.

He wants us to know that even in the times of greatest need, we can derive strength and energy and hope from the God who set up the universe, and life itself. The strength of the tree comes from its water source, and that water source in our lives is the living water, Jesus Christ. Sometimes we can lose sight of how important that relationship to Christ is. It is critical to our

cardiac condition. That relationship affects how much we worry, how much we display the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self control.

That relationship with Christ truly gives us the capacity to love and be loved.

The Lord searches our hearts and our minds. He alone can do the heart surgery and brain surgery we need for our sin sick souls. Stay with me this week, as we continue our series on being sick and tired.

Sick and Tired. Wednesday, February 14, 2008.

All you need is love...duh duh duh duh duh...all you need is love...
...duh duh duh duh duh...all you need is love...love, love is all you need.

There's a lot of truth in that little song. But just like the needle used to jump off the record player, so goes our experiences of love. Faithful love has been bashed. Creative love has been cracked. We need a new and powerful experience of love, from the One who created love.

Jesus said, in John 15, verse 12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

The problem comes when I realize that I'm sick and tired and can't love the way I'm supposed to love. I don't even receive love the way I'm supposed to receive it. So what can I possibly do to become the loving person I'm supposed to be.

First of all, realize that Jesus is talking about himself as the One who lay down his life for his friends. And if you are longing to love, you are longing to be his friend. He teaches us what it means to love. He shows us in his own attitudes and actions what it means to love.

Like it says in 1 Corinthians 13, which we often hear at weddings, although it was meant for the church:

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This kind of love seeks the other person's best first. That's God's kind of love. Our love often gives in order to get something. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours, or something like that. But God's kind of love keeps on giving.

God's love changes us in ways that we cannot change ourselves. His love surrounds us and protects us when we've given our lives to Him just as our immune system protects us against being deathly sick and tired.

A big part of our heartsickness is our lack of love, both giving and receiving love. It's no wonder that Valentine's Day has become so big. The only One who can fill the void for love is God Himself.

And on His valentine for you, it is written, No greater love has anyone than this, to lay down his life for his friends. Stay with me as we complete this week of being sick and tired, while knowing the Doctor, the Great Physician is in the house.

Sick and Tired. Thursday, February 15, 2008

This song entitled "Dr. Jesus" is
From Michael O'Martien's 1980 album, *The Builder*

Dr. Jesus, it hurts so bad right here.
Now, would you be so kind?
To check here deep inside my heart,
and just below my mind.
Yes, I've had this pain for quite a while;
a lifetime, I believe.
I've tried everything I know of,
and it never seems to leave.
I heard you're the only specialist

who's ever had the cure.
The others only cover up
a wound that's always there.
You come highly recommended.
In fact, millions of people say
if you wanna be saved from death and hell,
you've got the only way.

Chorus 1:

Thank you, Dr. Jesus,
for giving me your time.
How your love appeases
a discontented mind.
Now I'm feeling better,
being here with you.
See if I remember
all that I should do.

Chorus 2:

Pray for one another, brother,
read the Word, believe it,
and remember I'm the doctor,
cast your cares upon me.

Jesus says in Matthew 11: 28 – 30:

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

During this time of Lent, Jesus reminds us that when we are sick and tired, he is available to us as the Great Physician. No matter what the burden, no matter how great the need for rest, Jesus Christ is available to you.

He invites us to invite Him into the stresses and strains of our lives. He wants to take the brunt of work issues, family challenges, friendship difficulties, marriage questions, neighborhood problems, you name it. He wants to be right there beside you, taking the weight of whatever it is that is weighing you down.

So when you're sick and tired, remember to see your Doctor, and remember His prescription: pray for one another, read the Word, believe it, and remember Jesus is the doctor, cast your cares upon him.

Sick and Tired. Friday, February 16, 2008

I've been inviting you along on this Lenten journey to invite the Lord into life, no matter how sick and tired you are. I've literally been sick with pneumonia and tired because of illness. Many of you are quite physically healthy, but maybe you're sick and tired of the politics, the media, the weather, I'm not sure what it might be, but you're sick of it.

We have a Doctor to go to who knows our woes and also cares deeply about us. This is our Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ. He also went through the deserts of temptation, testing his selfishness, or rather selflessness. He also gave up eating for a period of time to remember the truth of the Scripture, that we do not live by food alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

It's interesting that the devil tempted Jesus in three areas, probably three areas that you and I may struggle with as well. First, it was about supplying your own needs and doing an about face in a spiritual fast. Jesus could have easily turned stones or dirt into something to eat. We too are constantly tempted by what to put in our mouths. Knowing when to refrain and when to partake of the amazing diversity of foods today is still an issue for us who have so much. Secondly, Jesus was tempted to throw his life away, to propel himself to the rocks below. It may seem like a strange temptation, or maybe it is all too common. The devil says: Do away with yourself, you can drink and drive, your life is in God's hands, throw yourself off that cliff, swerve into traffic there. The devil still wants to kill us, but don't give into temptation.

Finally, the tempter decides to simply offer the whole world to Jesus. Since the world had been handed over to the devil by disobedient humans, it was a real offer, the biggest real estate deal of all time. But Jesus knew that his power came from trusting the One who holds all our lives in his hands. He rejected the devil's offer, as we should be wary of power given over to us illegitimately or for evil purposes. The old pop song used to say,

“Everybody wants to rule the world.” No matter how true or false that statement is, power needs to always be held together with accountability.

God knows what we are going through in our own deserts these days, whether despair, delight, demise, demolition or demonstration. The internal medicine that God offers is the best of all. To know God and ourselves brings us joy and brings God praise. No matter what you're going through presently, I hope these few moments of reflection have been helpful. I'm Dr. Jonathan Dent at St. David's Church, here in St. John's. God bless you.