

You've seen those signs hanging from machines and dispensers, even hanging sometimes on the door of a restroom: Out of Order. It can be frustrating, especially when you have to search for one that is in order. Even more frustrating is when you feel like taking that sign and claiming it for yourself.

You know what I mean. We have all had days when our bodies were racked with sickness and with pain. When nothing about us seemed to be in good working order. On those days we wanted to stay in bed and hang an out-of-order sign on the door. And I'm sure there are some of you who feel like you could wear that sign from around your neck day in and day out.

Hearing the words of our text this morning, it might seem to us that the people of Galilee would have benefited from having thousands of those signs. Was there anyone in that region who was healthy? Scads of people were coming to Jesus, or being brought to Him, who were suffering from disease, affliction, sickness, pains, even demons. Maybe one great big out-of-order sign should have been placed next to the road leading into the region of Galilee.

But then in our text we see Jesus going into this region and He heals, not a few, but all who come to Him. They come with sickness. They come with pain and with afflictions. They come with demons and with disease. They come with epilepsy and with paralysis. And Jesus heals every single one of them. He is taking the out-of-order signs from around their necks and putting the people back into good working order.

Now what the people should have seen by this was a going back to creation; to God's good creation which was upset by sin and Satan; to the perfect order He had created which was turned into disorder. Here is Jesus, one person at a time, restoring to good order what sin and Satan had upset and flipped upside down.

No wonder His fame spread everywhere. No wonder great crowds were following Him. Wouldn't you? Here is a man who puts things back into good working order. Here is someone who heals anything and everything. Who wouldn't want to follow Him? "Let's cancel our health insurance," husbands in Galilee were telling their wives, "We've got Jesus now!"

But they're missing the point. Jesus is not there to put the doctors out of work. He has come to bring something greater, much greater, than physical health and well-being. He comes as the Christ, the Messiah, to restore people, yes sinners, to their place with God.

You see, everyone Jesus healed eventually lost the good health He gave them. And everyone who was healed would, one day, die. Jesus is not, therefore, attempting to create a heaven on earth for the people of Galilee. He is restoring God's creation to good order only as a sign, a foretaste, of what is to come in the end. When He comes again in glory, He will bring all who follow Him in faith into the new creation, heaven itself, in which there will never be disorder, never be sickness, pain, sin, Satan, or death.

Now Jesus could remove the out-of-order sign from around your neck. He could easily heal you of what ails you. And, through doctors, nurses, and medicine, sometimes He does. But He has something much greater to give you than simply restoring your body which, one day, will die. He restores your soul. And He does this for you because, for you too, He is the Christ, the Messiah, the One who comes to restore your place with God, your place in both body and soul.

It was badly in need of restoring. It was in disorder. Your life, just like mine, was a toilet that would not flush. Picture that if you will. Our sinful lives were a stench to God. That's why Jesus came. To become the stench in our place. To hang from a filthy cross. To die on that cross. And because He did this for you, your life is a beautiful aroma to God.

It's not because you are without sin now. It's because your sins are forgiven, all of them, even the worst of them, the filthiest of them, and all for Jesus' sake. Your baptism into Christ Jesus has washed away all your sins. You are clean before God. Your heart is now cleansed in His eyes.

Is this why you follow Jesus? Is this why you are here? Followers come and go. Most all of the people of Galilee, those great crowds who were following Him, left Him just a few short years later. They all did. That happens here too. We see others all around us who have quit following Jesus for whatever reason. Maybe we wonder about ourselves. After all, there is no one who follows Jesus perfectly.

But think of this – is there a little child, a toddler anywhere who follows his or her parents perfectly? And would parents ignore their child if their child could not keep up? If they were walking on a crowded sidewalk, and their child was lagging behind like always, would the parents forget about their child because their child was a poor follower?

Then how much more will God not forget about us! You are His dear child, baptized into Christ Jesus. He will never ignore you, nor neglect you, nor leave you. Even if you are the worst follower ever, He will constantly call to you, and wait for you. And will He not come back for you, take hold of you, and when you fall into sin He will lift you up, clean you off, and forgive you. This is your God who loves you dearly. How good, therefore, that Jesus has restored us to our place with Him. Amen.