

Luke 4:38-44

³⁸Jesus got up, left the synagogue, and went into Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. They asked him to help her. ³⁹He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. ⁴⁰As the sun was setting, they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases. He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹Demons also came out of many people, crying out, "You are the Son of God!" He rebuked them and did not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

⁴²When it was day, he went out to a deserted place. The crowds were looking for him. They went up to him and were trying to prevent him from leaving them. ⁴³But he told them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is why I was sent." ⁴⁴And he continued to preach in the synagogues in the land of the Jews.

Rebuked

I.

Rebuke. It's an interesting word. The dictionary definition says that "rebuke" means "to criticize sharply; to reprimand."

Criticize sharply, reprimand, or rebuke imply something one person does to another. Have you ever rebuked someone? I would imagine you have.

At times, rebuking another person is a good and right thing to do. Paul said it in today's Second Reading. "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16, EHV). With words like "teaching" and "correcting" and "training in righteousness" surrounding the word "rebuking," we realize that *this* kind of rebuking is God-pleasing.

There are times that rebuking is not so good. Jesus once explained to his disciples that he would have to suffer and die. The disciples didn't understand yet, at that time, how necessary for their own salvation Jesus' suffering and death were, so: "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him" (Mark 8:32, EHV). Reprimanding or criticizing Jesus doesn't seem to be a very wise course of action, does it?

II.

Perhaps at times you and I are tempted to fall into the same trap as Peter. It is easy to reprimand or criticize Jesus. Oh, you might *think* that is something you would never, ever do. Is it really so far fetched?

You reprimand and rebuke God every time you think *you* know better. Have you ever chosen to ignore parts of God's Word because what they said didn't match what society has taught you is right to expect—and even *demand*? Have you ever been one of those Paul talked about in the Second Reading? "There will come a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, because they have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in line with their own desires. ⁴They will also turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4, EHV).

Paul had just told Timothy that *all* of the Bible is important and useful. That's what he means here by "sound doctrine." Everything God has to say is good and right and important. None of it is to be ignored. None of it is to be shunted to the side as if God didn't know what he was talking about. Yet lots of things the world accepts as normal behaviors violate what God says is right and just. Perhaps you look at the world as being so much

more enlightened than it was in Bible times; some of those things God spoke against were only for *those* people and *those* times; they don't apply to us anymore. Itching-ear disease is pervasive and destructive. In reality, itching-ear disease is you simply slapping God in the face and rebuking him for daring to say something *you* disagree with.

How about the rebuking of inanimate objects? You probably have done it. Do you rebuke your car? Maybe when the car won't start you criticize it sharply and reprimand it. That doesn't change the fact that it won't start. Do you rebuke the weather? Maybe. Maybe you don't like the cold and the snow the way some of us do, and you rebuke it. Your rebuke changes nothing. The cold and the snow keep coming until the warm front moves through and the weather changes. Do you rebuke a sickness or a fever? Maybe. But it isn't going to make your fever go away.

III.

The word "rebuke" in today's Gospel just jumped off the page to me when I read the text early in the week. It jumped off the page because of the way the word is used here. Jesus rebuked an inanimate object.

Back to ways we might have *tried* ineffectually to rebuke inanimate objects. There were no cars when Jesus walked this earth, so he never rebuked a car for failing to start. But the other two are striking. Jesus *did* rebuke the weather. Out on the boat when the disciples were terrified of the storm that threatened to capsize their vessel, Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves—and the storm stopped immediately.

Then there is the case of sickness. "Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever. They asked him to help her. ³⁹He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them" (Luke 4:38-39, EHV). Jesus *rebuked* the fever. And it left her. There was no wait for the ibuprofen to kick in and take effect. There was no gradual recovery in a hospital bed before she could get up with some assistance and leave. It left her. So quickly that she was immediately able to go about her normal routine. She began to serve Jesus and his disciples.

After Peter's mother-in-law had been healed, "As the sun was setting, they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases. He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them" (Luke 4:40, EHV). While Jesus didn't rebuke these other diseases the healing continued. No disease the people brought to him was any match for Jesus' power. "Every one of them" was healed.

While that's quite a display of power, the next verse is perhaps even more striking than the rebuke of weather and disease. "Demons also came out of many people, crying out, 'You are the Son of God!' He rebuked them and did not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ" (Luke 4:41, EHV). While the demons were speaking the truth, they spoke the truth to misrepresent Jesus and what he had come to do. This Jesus would not allow. His rebuke had the same effect as his rebuke of the fever. Jesus' rebuke has the power of God—the demons could do nothing other than to obey his command.

It wasn't the first time. Just before our text he had driven a demon out of another man. When the people saw it: "They were all filled with awe and began to say to one another, 'What is this message? With authority and power he commands unclean spirits, and they come out!'" (Luke 4:36, EHV). Jesus' power and authority were shocking. How could anyone have so much power? How could anyone do such things?

You know the answer. Jesus *is* God. He is both truly God and truly human. The power he held over demons and illness and weather is the same power he demonstrated over sin.

What a comfort that is! We find ourselves rebuking inanimate objects. We find ourselves

rebuking God and wanting to go our own way and make our own choices. We find ourselves with itching-ear disease that wants to turn away from the truth of what God has said and turn aside to myths.

IV.

“When it was day, he went out to a deserted place” (Luke 4:42, EHV). Jesus didn’t just want some alone time. Mark’s account of this event says that he “...was praying there” (Mark 1:35, EHV). Jesus had the power and authority to rebuke sickness and weather. He also had power over sin. But he came for a reason. He came to deal with sin once and for all.

There was much that was yet to be done. The battles over sin were still ongoing. The itching-ear disease Paul spoke of comes when people don’t want to follow God’s Word or don’t think it is relevant. Don’t be fooled; Satan went after Jesus with those same ideas. He wanted Jesus to give in to itching-ear disease, because if *Jesus* gave in, we all would be lost.

He did not give in. His prayers there in that deserted place were part of his regular conversations with God. Prayer is important to strengthen yourself for the spiritual battles. Jesus had the ultimate spiritual battle. He did not reject God’s commands and go his own way. He fulfilled all righteousness as our substitute. He might have *appeared* weak and helpless as he hung on the cross, but even there he was rebuking sin and Satan. They held no power to defeat him. Though Jesus is God, God abandoned him there to suffer the hell of sin all alone. In the final rebuke of sin he cried out “It is finished.”

Your ill-made rebukes and mine were all paid in full.

When Jesus was off by himself praying for the strength he needed to keep fighting the good fight for us, “The crowds were looking for him. They went up to him and were trying to prevent him from leaving them” (Luke 4:42, EHV). Why would they want to prevent him from leaving? It is likely they were much like the crowd of 5,000 who had their stomachs filled when Jesus fed them. They wanted him to do more of these miracles. They wanted him to go on taking care of their physical needs. No doubt they would rebuke him if “all” he offered was spiritual food.

“But he told them, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is why I was sent.’”⁴⁴ And he continued to preach in the synagogues in the land of the Jews” (Luke 4:43-44, EHV).

Everyone needs to hear the good news. Everyone needs to know that Jesus has the power to rebuke weather and sickness. Everyone needs to know especially that Jesus has the power to rebuke sin. He has done it. It is finished.

Jesus continues to preach in our synagogues week after week. He comes to us in his Word and sacraments to remind us of the good news that he has rebuked sin and Satan and has set us free.

Everyone needs to know it. Jesus continues to preach the good news through you, as well as through me. Use your time and talents and treasures to show people that Jesus’ rebuke of sin was done for them, too. Amen.