

**Jesus' Health Care is the Best**  
**I. It's the Only One that's Free**  
**II. It's the Only One that Works**

*<sup>9</sup> As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **"Follow me,"** he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. <sup>10</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" <sup>12</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>13</sup> But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."***

One of the hot topics in the upcoming presidential election is health care. It's a hot topic because it affects everyone. The rising cost of premiums, out-of-pocket expenses, prescription drugs and general services make it difficult not only to pay the doctor bills but even afford the cost of a health care plan. As a result millions of folks in America don't even have health insurance. Some of the candidates are promising that when they take the Oval Office big government will fix all of our health care problems. The presidential hopefuls are promising to lower the costs and make health care available to everyone. It's a nice promise, but those plans require lots of money; money from the tax payers and money spent on legislating new laws.

The Bible doesn't speak about hospitals, HMOs or health insurance. The Bible does talk about doctors. Our lesson this morning comes from Matthew 9:9-13. This lesson is sandwiched between two accounts of medical miracles. Just prior to our lesson, Jesus gives new life to a paralyzed man's legs. In the story after our lesson Jesus raises a man's dead daughter and gives sight and speech to men who were blind and mute. And so it is very fitting that our Lord talks about doctors in our lesson this morning.

What's unique about Jesus is that he completely relieved the suffering of his patients and never once asked for any kind of payment in return. After you visit your doctor's office, a hefty bill will arrive in your mailbox asking you to pay for the services provided, whether or not the good doc helped cure your condition. Jesus would certainly beat any presidential candidate with his kind of health care. But the Great Physician did not only provide free health care for the body, but more importantly, for the soul. Those who were healed by Jesus joyfully put their trust in him as the Doctor who would save them from their spiritual disease of sin.

Unfortunately, there were a group of men who witnessed many Jesus' acts of healing and still did not believe that he was the one who could set them free from their sins: the Pharisees. The Pharisees invented their own laws in addition to the commands the LORD issued. They oppressed God's people and made them believe they were not good enough for the LORD if they did not follow these additional "traditions of the elders." Here was the Savior, who offered them the best health care, and it was free! There was nothing to earn, no payment required. It would be like someone knocking on your door and saying, "I will pay all of your premiums, deductibles, out-of-pocket expenses, prescriptions and co-pays, from now until the day you die, and you won't owe me a penny." And you say, "Um, no thanks," and shut the door. The Pharisees, in their great conceit said, "No thanks," to the Great Physician who could set them free from their sins forever. Jesus had said to them, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."** The Pharisees thought they were the healthy ones. They believed that because of their outwardly good lives that they were right in God's sight. Because they so firmly believed this they would not and could not believe that Jesus had something better to offer them; free salvation by faith in Christ.

Because all of us are born infected with sin, we naturally have the opinion that we are good enough. In our sinful pride we like to think that if we do enough – show up to church once a while, put a little in the offering plate, be nice to others when we feel like it – that will be good enough for God. The Great Physician uses the scalpel of the Law and cuts at our sinful pride when he says, **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart,**

**soul and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself.”** Put God first in your life, put others second, and your needs and desires last. Jesus keeps us from thinking that we’re good enough by reminding us through his Law that we aren’t even close. Paul says in Romans 6:23, “**All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.**” Fallen short of God’s glory means death for all...

If you are terminally ill, many health insurance companies will not enroll you. You’re a high liability and the insurance company will have to pay out a lot of money. All of us are born into this world terminally ill. Because of our sin we will die. Not just a physical death, but forever in hell. What spiritual health insurance company would even consider an application from us? Jesus didn’t wait for our application. He signed you up. In fact, he signed up all people. And he knew that if he enrolled all people in his health care plan, it would be free of charge for them, but the price would be high for him. Our death meant his death. But he willingly and joyfully gave free spiritual health care to all people when he suffered and died. Jesus’ health care is the best because it’s free and it works.

**II. It's the Only One that Works** When Becky and I first moved to Kentucky four years ago, the church council recommended that our family enroll in a health insurance plan that the previous pastor and family had. Two weeks after submitting our application the letter came back saying: REJECTED. The reason: you have a preexisting condition. My wife was eight months pregnant. Thankfully our synod has its own health insurance plan that accepts called workers and their families no matter what their preexisting condition.

All people are born into this world with a preexisting condition. All are thoroughly corrupt with sin. This highly contagious disease has been passed down from parent to child ever since the Garden of Eden. This disease of sin causes the heart to think, the mouth to say and the body to do things that are disgusting in God’s sight. Take Matthew from our lesson for example. He was an outcast in the Israelite community. He collected taxes for the Roman government. Like most Jewish IRS workers, Matthew was a cheat and full of greed. His sinful nature had taken hold of him so that he was not only a social reprobate in the eyes of the Jews, but also in God’s sight. But Jesus shows his mercy when he called Matthew, a disgusting sinner, to his apostle. Out of joyful thanksgiving Matthew throws a party in Jesus’ honor and invites his friends. But the Pharisees were watching...

By their name, the Pharisees were separatists. They thought they were better than other Jews because of their undying devotion to his commandments and their own man-made laws. They kept themselves separate from such sinners as Matthew and company and their corrupt influence. And so, in their arrogance they questioned Jesus’ disciples and asked, “**Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?**” *Sinners* here probably refer to other degenerates; prostitutes, thieves or anyone guilty by association with tax collectors.

But Jesus did not look at these social outcasts and say, “Ew, I wouldn’t want to be caught dead in their company.” Instead he ate and drank with them. Please note: he did not dismiss their sinful lifestyles. Instead he pointed out their great need for repentance and amendment of their sinful ways. He taught them to seek forgiveness through faith in him. They hung around Jesus because unlike the Pharisees’ idea of righteousness, Jesus provided a health care plan that worked.

You and I may not be tax collectors. However, as said before, we are born with a preexisting condition that causes us to sin. And just like Matthew, you and I are full of greed and we are cheaters. We cheat our employers when we don’t work our hardest or when we waste time at work. We cheat the government when we tweak the numbers on our tax forms. We rob from our God when we fail to joyfully give the firstfruits. The stimulus check you will all receive; are the firstfruits going to God? The talents you have; are the best used in joyful service to the Lord? The time the Lord gave you; is the best set aside for family devotions and prayer, worship and Bible study? We may not be outcasts in society, but we deserve to be an outsider in God’s sight. We deserve to have God look at us and say, “Ew, I don’t want anything to do with those people.” And yet, Christ was willing to associate with you and me despite our infectious sinful condition.

There is a story of a mother who was told by doctors that she could no longer go near her daughter, because her daughter had a very rare and extremely contagious terminal disease. The mother didn't care. As her child was dying she wrapped her arms around her, held her, and rocked her. Of course, the child died, and soon after, so did the mother, who caught the same contagious disease. Christ willingly came to earth to intentionally become infected with the disease of our sin, not just to comfort us while we are dying, but to save us from an eternity of suffering. He didn't care that he got sick. It was precisely why he came; to completely take away our infection of sin and its ugly consequence, by dying in our place. The apostle Paul says in 2Corinthians 5:20, **"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."**

Now, when the Heavenly Physician pulls out your chart, he looks down and sees that instead of being rejected by The Pearly Gates Insurance Company you have been enrolled in Jesus' health care plan. The Doctor of Souls personally signed you up when he had you washed with water and his Word. Through Holy Baptism the Great Physician pulled you out of your preexisting condition, death, and gave you a new status; life and holiness. Because of your baptism, no longer have you fallen short of God's glory. Through baptism you receive Jesus' life which completely met God's righteous requirements. No longer will you be an outcast because of your sins of cheating, greed, pride and self-righteousness, but live forever in heaven with your Father because through baptism you have died with Christ and have risen with him in his resurrection from death. Jesus' health insurance plan is the best because through baptism, it works!

And it continues to work. When you are troubled by your sins of greed, cheating, pride and self-righteousness, the Great Physician has prescribed a heavenly medication for you, that when you take it, you receive his body and blood. This body and blood will reassure you that the disease of your sin has been taken away. This flesh and blood is the same that saved you from death, from Satan and from your sins. Come to the altar rejoicing, confident that his flesh and blood gives you eternal life, where your body will be untouched by disease, impervious to death and your soul will no longer be susceptible to the spiritual diseases of sin and temptation. So come, eat and drink, and rejoice! It's free and it works!

It doesn't matter who you are, health insurance is never easy. The hours on the phone for a referral, the co-pays, the hike in premiums, the months of waiting for that one bill that never did get submitted. Take heart, dear friends. Jesus' health care plan is the best, because it's the only one that's free, and it's the only one that works! Amen.