

Eavesdropping on God:
God's Healthcare Reform

Good morning! My name is Patrick Gibbs and I am one of the pastors here at MVBC. Pastor Bob is off today, getting ready for "*Cardio: Hope for the Disheartened.*" That's the series we will kickoff next week with Easter.

If you happen to follow current events or watch the news or talk to people, you have probably heard about the healthcare debate and reform that has been occurring lately. Last Sunday, President Obama signed a bill that changes the way we do healthcare in America. And it seems to be on everybody's mind. Whether you support it or you don't, it seems to be all I have heard about being out and about this week. Every news show is talking about it. I got my oil changed Thursday; someone started talking to me about it. The doctor's office, Little League, even the church office. Even my Facebook is littered with questions, comments for and against, ideology, gloating, sarcasm, anger, name calling. Healthcare is a big deal. It's a concern most people have in our society. We don't live in a time where we can pay the doctor with chickens anymore. People are concerned about accessibility and costs and preexisting conditions and taxes and what's fair and what's right and what's moral. And currently, our country seems pretty divided when it comes to answering those questions and solving those issues. Frankly, it's been an exhausting week filled with tension. And if it's ok, I'd like to stop and pray right now for our nation.

PRAY: Father, I thank we live in a place where we can freely debate. And I thank you that we live in a time of such medical advancement. Father I pray for our leaders. I'd ask you give them wisdom and compassion as they make decisions that affect us all. And help us to be civil; to debate and disagree with civility. And as Christians Lord, guard our hearts. May we operate as your agent with a sense of grace and compassion for those around us.

Amen!

This morning, I'd like to talk about healthcare of sorts. But not American healthcare; not physical healthcare. I'd like to consider spiritual healthcare. Did you know you need a spiritual healthcare plan? Did you know God offers universal healthcare? This morning we're going to eavesdrop on Jesus again as he prays to God. And by eavesdropping on Jesus' prayers, we get a glimpse at God's healthcare plan.

Last week we looked at Jesus' prayer the night he was arrested. After he prayed, he was arrested, tried and convicted for claiming to be God. In our study this morning, we find Jesus nailed to the cross. He isn't dead yet, but he is slowly suffocating. Crucifixion was a horrible, painful, tortuous way to die. The Romans used it for slaves and foreigners. By the time Jesus was crucified, the Romans had mastered crucifixion as a public display of torture and punishment. Victims usually died of blood loss and/or suffocation. Some lasted hours; others lasted days.

Jesus was on the cross for approx 6 hours before he died. And in those 6 hours, he made 7 statements. Some were directed at people; some were directed at God. This morning, I'd like to look at two statements Jesus directed to God. These two statements on the cross are actually one sentence prayers to God, and if we think about what he says, we actually learn a great deal about God's universal healthcare plan.

But before we look at what Jesus said, I'd like to briefly consider why we need healthcare. We all suffer from the same disease. We have a spiritual cancer. It's the disease of sin. It is a cancer that destroys our spiritual life. In its most basic form, cancer results from damaged DNA. Once damaged, our DNA begins reproducing cells that are defective and dangerous. People respond to it differently; it comes in different forms. It manifests itself

differently. But in the end, it's a result of malfunctioning DNA. And just as cancer hijacks our DNA, so sin hijacks the DNA God created in us. When Adam and Eve were created, they had perfect spiritual DNA. They did not know sin or its consequences. But then they were deceived by the devil, and sin altered their DNA, and now ours. We are born with defective spiritual DNA, and it has consequences.

I won't recount the entire story, but you can find it in Genesis 3 if you'd like to read. Adam and Eve ate of the fruit God told them not to eat. And when they did, they introduced sin. Genesis says they became like God in that they now understood good and evil. And God also told them they would experience death. Death is a separation. In Adam and Eve's case- and ours now, their death was being separated from God such that they had to hide from him in shame while in the garden. God hadn't changed at all, but they had. They were also separated from the safety of God and the garden when God put them out the garden for sinning. They experienced spiritual death that day- a separation from God- which later manifests itself by physical death. And sin is passed on from generation to generation. And so does death, both physically and spiritually. ►

^{NLT} Romans 5:12 When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

And this spiritual death or separation affects our relationship with God. In fact, we can't really have a relationship with God. ►

^{NLT} Ephesians 2:2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil-- the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

That's why we need a healthcare plan. There is no way to undo or alter our spiritual DNA. There is no way to reverse the effects of Adam and Eve on our DNA. And that brings us to Jesus-- on the cross. While dying on the cross, Jesus prays two things that I believe reveal important aspects of God's healthcare plan.

Let's look briefly at each of them.

1. We find the first one in Luke 23:34. ►
 - a. ^{NLT} Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."
 - b. One important component of God's healthcare plan is forgiveness. Jesus prays "Father, forgive them..." and the question I have is, "Who is 'them'?" Certainly Jesus may be talking about those executing him. But let me ask you, whose sin is Jesus really being executed for? Look at 1 John. ►
 - i. ^{NLT} **1 John 2:2** He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins-- and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.
 - ii. Didn't Jesus die for all our sins? Aren't all of us complicit in the execution of Jesus?
 - c. Since his death on the cross was to pay for my sin, I too am one of the "them" that he prays to forgive. And so are you.
 - d. **EXAMPLE:** Sue Norton lives in Arkansas City, Kansas. In January 1990, her much beloved father and his wife were found murdered in their home. Sue's father was shot to death in his isolated

Oklahoma farmhouse. The crime netted the killer \$17.00 and an old truck. Sue couldn't understand why someone would want to hurt people who were old and poor.

- e. She sat through the trial of Robert Knighton. She was confused about how she should feel. The last night of the trial Sue got permission to visit Robert through the bars of his holding cell. Sue relates, "I was really frightened. This was my first experience in a jail. He was big and tall; he was shackled and had cold steely eyes." Sue told him, "I don't know what to say to you. But I want you to know, if you are guilty, I forgive you." He thought Sue was just playing games. He couldn't understand how she could forgive him for such a terrible crime. Sue says, "I didn't think of him as killer, I thought of him as a human being. While on death row in Oklahoma, Sue wrote to him often and visited occasionally. She became friends with her father's killer. On May 27, 2003, Robert was executed. And Sue was there- not as a victim to see justice, but as a support to Robert in his final hours.
- f. I hear stories like this and wonder where this forgiveness comes from. But try if you can to put yourself in the murderer's shoes. That's us in this story. We are the one who's done wrong. We are the one deserving of death. We are the person on death row. But Jesus took our place; he stepped in and took our place in the execution room.
- g. God's forgiveness is a big deal. Here's why. Because God no longer demands payment for my sin- or yours. Jesus paid the bill.▶
 - i. ^{NLT} Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.
- h. And because he did, forgiveness is available. God does not come calling for his healthcare premiums because they are already paid by Jesus. You can't earn forgiveness from God; it's simply granted. There are not enough spiritual things you can do to pay off your sin debt.
- i. And this forgiveness part of God's healthcare plan has some other pretty exciting benefits.
 - i. For starters, it is free. God's healthcare doesn't cost me anything. Because God's requirement, death, Jesus paid for already. It wasn't cheap; Jesus is hanging on the cross to pay it. But it is free to us.
 - ii. Secondly, this healthcare covers preexisting conditions. Forgiveness is available regardless of past sins because your past sins are already paid for. God's requirement has already been met. It isn't costing more because you've done more. You aren't in deeper spiritual debt because of your past. The debt is paid and accepted.
 - iii. Thirdly, it's for anyone. We all suffer from the same spiritual condition- sin. There is no one in this room more spiritually superior to anyone else. ▶

^{NLT} Acts 10:43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."
- iv. Lastly, our forgiveness isn't based on performance. My acceptance in this healthcare plan is not based on my performance. It's only "requirement"- if you will- is that I believe in Jesus. We are relying on what Jesus did- that's it.
- j. So, forgiveness is an awesome benefit to God's healthcare plan. Let's move on to prayer #2.

2. We find the next prayer in Mark 15. ▶

- a. ^{NLT} Mark 15:34 Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"
- b. Jesus prays this prayer shortly before he dies. For almost 6 hours he has endured the weight of the world's debt. For 6 hours, he has bore the pain and suffering of the world's sin. And like his prayer in the garden, the emotion of his humanity seems overwhelming. Notice he doesn't call God "Father" here. It's like our sin- my sin- has made him an orphan to his Father. The sin that separates me from God is now the sin that separates Jesus from his father.
- c. Had God really abandoned Jesus? I'm not sure. But I am confident Jesus felt like it. Jesus bore that pain, that abandonment, that rejection, that justice from God.
- d. And I think the greatest significance is this- I won't be abandoned. He was abandoned so I would be. The relational barrier created between God and man by sin has been removed. God's healthcare plan removes the relational barriers created by sin.
 - i. First, the Bible says we are reconciled to God. That is, our friendship- our relationship- with God can be restored. ►
 1. ^{NLT} Colossians 1:20 and through him (Jesus) God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.
 - ii. The Bible also says that God adopts us into his family. ►
 1. ^{NLT} Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.
 - iii. EXAMPLE: I never really understood the impact of adoption ► until I met Ayla. There's Ayla. Ayla was born in the back of a van in an ally in Tucson. He parents homeless and substance abusers, unable to care for her. She was taken by the state and put in foster care. And Ayla was cared for in foster care. Her physical needs were met. But Ayla had no family. She was one of several children living in this foster home; one of many to be cared for. She had no one to call "momma." No one cuddling her. No one meeting her emotional needs. And through a very strange and unique series of events, my friends found out about Ayla. And something inside them said this baby belongs in our family. So they began the process of adoption- for a child they didn't know. They spent their own money to fight for Ayla. To give Ayla a family. To give Ayla someone to call mommy and daddy. And finally, after 9 long months of red tape and thousands of dollars, Ayla finally came home. And several months later, she was officially adopted.
 - iv. And I remember sitting in a Burger King in Tucson with my friends, getting to meet Ayla for the very first time. She was about 8 months old. Watching them gloat over a baby they were fighting for. Watching their family just relish the moment. And I remember thinking, "this is what it means to be adopted." To have God gloat and give me his name and make me a part of his family. To act there was no barrier between us.
 - v. The spiritual truth here is this: We all start out like Ayla- abandoned. Lost. Alone. But God set out to adopt us. Through nothing we did. He spent his own money if you will. So we could be adopted into his forever family. ►

^{NLT} Romans 8:15 So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

- e. Today, ► Ayla calls my friends mommy and daddy. There she is wrapped around her mommy's neck. She is happy and healthy. She is loved. She is secure. She belongs. She's been adopted.
- f. And when Jesus cries out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" he is experiencing the separation that comes from sin so I don't have to. His pain and separation and abandonment allows us to be adopted into God's family. Jesus' prayer on the cross represents the tearing down of the relational barriers created by sin. And that is a good thing.

Conclusion:

► As we close this morning, I'd like us to consider what we might do with God's healthcare plan.

1. Participating in God's healthcare plan has one requirement. God requires you believe or trust Him that his plan is enough. ►
 - a. ^{NLT} Acts 10:43 He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."
 - b. This isn't something you earn. It's something God already bought. You are something Jesus has already paid for.
 - c. Do you believe that? Has there ever been a time you believed that Jesus paid for your sin? I'd encourage you to believe- to trust that what Jesus did is all you need. ►
2. Secondly, I know that many of you would say- yes, I have believed that. I have experienced the forgiveness and adoption you are talking about. Then let me challenge you to do this- tell somebody.
 - a. Next Sunday is Easter. It represents the anniversary of God's healthcare reform. Invite somebody.
 - b. What if we got as motivated about God's healthcare as we did Obama's healthcare? I'd venture to say, if we are a normal group of people, our friends know more about our stand on America's healthcare than on God healthcare. And if that's true, we have the opportunity to change it.
 - c. On your chair is a prayer card. Write some names on it and pray for them this week. Then invite them to the anniversary of God's healthcare- Easter.

PRAY