

Malady: I think I know best what I need, and I make Jesus whatever I want to fill that need.

Virtue: God has given us His Word that tells us everything we need to know about the Savior.

Cure: Jesus did everything the Scriptures said he would do, so that I could have the salvation I really needed.

Propositional Statement: Even though we try to make Jesus into the Savior we want, God has done exactly what He said He would do in His Word and given us the Jesus we need.

Purpose Statement: The purpose of my sermon is to guide my hearers to stay rooted in God's Word that tells them everything they need to know for salvation.

Theme: The Savior That I Need

1. Not the One I Imagined
2. The Savior I Was Promised

Be honest - have you ever actually taken the time to read the Terms and Conditions before you make a purchase? Or have you, like so many millions of others, simply checked that box without giving it a second thought? But what do you miss if you don't take a close look at those pesky Terms and Conditions? All that complicated jargon and fancy lawyer-speak didn't spring up for no reason. Every word in that contract has a purpose, and could be the difference between being able to return your purchase or cancel your membership, or being stuck with what you have.

It's the same way with God's Word - every single word is there for a purpose, and just like those Terms and Conditions it has an important message to communicate, with some consequences if that message is ignored. The difference is that this message is far more important than any other, and ignoring it has eternal consequences! It's a message that can be seen in every book of the Bible, from Old Testament to New - the message of our Savior Jesus.

With such an important message, you'd think that the people who knew Jesus best would have known it inside and out, right? Well, not so much. As it turns out, even Jesus' own disciples weren't immune to the "Terms and Conditions" effect - they had heard the message about Jesus, but they hadn't paid attention to the whole thing.

This is why in Luke's account today we come upon two of Jesus' disciples, not from among the Twelve but who had still been following Jesus, walking on the road towards a village called Emmaus together and discussing everything that had just happened. Just a few short days before, they had seen their teacher and friend, Jesus, executed on a cross and buried in a tomb. They felt abandoned and alone, but most of all disappointed - this wasn't how they had expected things to go!

Scripture had prophesied about the Messiah, a mighty figure who would unite the tribes of Judah and restore the people of Israel to their former glory, like in the days of David and Solomon. They were expecting a powerful figure to rise up and overthrow the oppressive Romans who had run roughshod over the Holy Land. What they got instead was an ordinary-looking man from Nazareth who was put to death by the very government the disciples had expected him to overthrow!

As if that weren't enough, they were trying to come to grips with something strange that had just happened. That morning, some of the women, including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James had burst in on the disciples and told them that they had seen Jesus, alive! But the disciples brushed it off, saying "That's impossible!" Hadn't they just seen him put on trial, hung on a cross, and buried in a tomb?

It's clear these two disciples had a lot on their minds, and plenty to talk about as they walked the miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. If you've ever been in an intense conversation before, you know how easy it can be to be so focused on the topic at hand that you forget what's happening around you. So it's not hard to imagine that Jesus had an easy time coming up along this pair of disciples unnoticed,

as they walked along absorbed in their conversation. But that's not the most interesting detail in this account; we're not only told that the disciples didn't immediately notice Jesus joining them, but when they did, they were prevented from recognizing him!

Why would Jesus not want for his disciples to know who he was, especially when he had just revealed himself to the women earlier that day? Consider this; would he have been able to teach them the way that he did, if they knew who he was? How could they concentrate on the truths of Scripture when their teacher had risen from the dead! Jesus wanted an opportunity to show these disciples something important that they had missed, and so he hid his identity from them for a short time.

Of course, the way Jesus went about teaching them this important truth is striking all on its own; Jesus uses some strong language to describe these disciples! Nobody wants to be described as "slow" or "foolish." But Jesus isn't saying this to insult his disciples - he's saying it to correct them, to stop them from continuing in bad habits that were causing them unnecessary grief. Notice how Jesus doesn't accuse them of complete unbelief - these disciples hadn't fallen away. But one word in Jesus' rebuke exposes the truth of the disciples' mistake, the same one we make far too often ourselves; "all."

Just like those disciples, we've heard prophecies from Scripture before - but have we really *listened* to them? Or maybe, like those disciples, have we just "checked the box" and moved on with our lives, thinking that we've done enough to get by? Have we heard the full truth about the Savior from Scripture, or just the parts we wanted to hear?

But what are we really missing when we fail to pay close attention to God's Word? Isn't it that the less we hear from Scripture, the less we know about our Savior? And that can open us up to all kinds of dangers. If all we know of Jesus are the bits and pieces we actually pay attention to, we can start to build a picture of him any way we like. Just like those disciples, we make Jesus fit the image of what we think he should be, instead of what He actually is. But our sinful natures can't understand the truth of God on their own, and Jesus isn't a Lego set with infinite possibilities right out of the box - he was carefully designed by God with a specific purpose in mind.

So what's the solution? How do I fight my sinful nature that distracts me so that I don't see the whole picture of Jesus? Jesus himself gives us the answer in our account today. He points us to Scripture and shows us that even though he isn't the Savior we imagined, he's the Savior we were promised, and the one that we needed.

Look at where Jesus begins when he starts to teach the disciples on the road to Emmaus. He doesn't take them back to the start of his ministry, he leads them all the way to the beginning of Scripture! From the very first writings of Moses all the way to the present, but why? Because Jesus understood the true value of God's Word and what it contains - not only the history of God's people, but the history of God's promise to send a Savior from sin.

When the first two people God created, Adam and Eve, committed the first sin and brought the consequences of sin into God's perfect creation, God wasted no time in giving us comfort - the first promise of the coming Savior appears in Genesis 3. And from there, throughout every book of the Old Testament, the thread of the promise of the Savior can be seen; it's in the genealogies that are so easy to gloss over, that show how the promise was passed along from generation to generation. It's in the prophecies made by prophets like Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah that point ahead to the coming Savior, telling God's people where he would be born and how he would save them from their sins.

This is the depth of God's love! That He not only carefully prepared the way for the coming of the Savior over hundreds of years and across generations, but also took the time and the care to preserve those promises for future generations in His Word - saving it for people like us. Not a single part of this process happened by accident, or without God's guiding hand behind it. Not even when that Savior finally arrived, but was put to death on a cross. It was through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus that our sins have been paid for, bought with precious blood from a line of people that could be traced all the way to the first two people in the Garden of Eden.

It's that same love that leads Jesus to prevent his disciples from recognizing him, until he is able to take the time to explain to them from Scripture that everything that had happened to him, even his death, was all part of God's gracious plan to save this world from sin. And the same care that we see Jesus take to teach these disciples on the road to Emmaus, he takes for you. He lovingly preserves His Word for you to read, and sends the Holy Spirit so that you can understand the full truth of why he needed to live, die, and rise again to save you from your sins. He covers you with His righteousness at your baptism, so that you can win the fight against your sinful nature that wants to distract you, and come to fully treasure the full truth we find in Scripture.

In August of 2014, a Russian man came to a settlement in a lawsuit he filed against a bank. The reason for suing them? They had broken the terms of a contract he had cleverly re-written in his favor when applying for a credit card. They skipped over the Terms and Conditions, and literally paid the price! Our sinful natures want us to do the same when it comes to reading God's Word - to read it however we want, so that we can make Jesus whatever we want him to be. But thanks be to God, who makes us new in our baptisms so that we can resist our old ways, and who shows us in His Word the Jesus that we may not always have imagined, but the Jesus who was promised for generations. The Jesus who didn't come to conquer, but to die, so that I could be free. The Jesus - the Savior - we really needed. Amen!