Fascinating Gospel lesson today. The reason is that there is so much healing that happens. Remember a few weeks ago in our lessons, Jesus was unable to heal in his own hometown. He couldn’t do much healing. A little, but not enough to make a difference. But today in our lesson the healing flows. It’s just an overwhelming healing. All you had to do was touch him. And massive amounts of people are having an overwhelming life change. So much healing, so much new life that you can’t even keep track of it.

What’s the difference? What is it that these people have that opens them up to God’s healing power? What is the characteristic of their state? Sure. They realize that they need help. It’s so simple. Sheep without a shepherd. A person without direction, without knowledge, a person that doesn’t know what to do, or how to do it. People who can’t do what needs to be done for themselves. People who are not self sufficient. People who are not in the know. People who are clueless. People who realize that they need a power to help them do what they cannot do for themselves.

My guess is that in Jesus hometown, being clueless was something to be avoided according to their way thinking. If you called someone clueless, that would not be a good thing for these folks. Or directionless, or needing help, people without knowledge, these folks would have said, “Well I sure don’t want to be like that”. I don’t want to be clueless, or directionless. Remember what they said about Jesus. We know him. We know his family. They’re in the know. They think they are right. They’ve got it figured out. They know what to do. And it’s that sense of being in charge, of being in control, of recreating what is familiar that is what their lives are about. But remember, Jesus can do no work there.

But today, amongst a people who don’t have a clue. Who don’t know what to do. Who realize that they need a power that they don’t have. Who realize that something needs to be done, that they cannot do. Ah, there is so much of God, so much of Jesus power, so much healing, so much life, so much newness, that the text can hardly contain it. There would be no way to even begin to track how much God was doing on this day. When people realized that they were powerless, and helpless. Sheep without a shepherd. Boom. Massive, massive miracles.

In our day, we are very familiar I think with this power. But for us, it has been reserved for people with problems with alcohol for example, or drugs. That’s the cliché. People talk about bottoming out. It’s sort of AA language. It’s the language of addiction. But that’s really what our Gospel lesson is about today. Because this is what it’s like to be an addict. I don’t know how to deal with this. I need help with this thing that I can’t stop. I can’t say no. This compulsive, relentless, restless, driven life. That’s what these people are in our Gospel lesson right. That’s the sense of the text. Sheep without a shepherd are just on the run.

What does it mean that these people are the ones who are healed? Who are the ones open to Jesus healing? While the ones who seemlngly have it all under control, are obstacles to God’s healing? I hope somewhere in you, you can see that sheep without a shepherd in you. Those places where you need help. The driven places. Those things that you would like to change, but seem powerless to change. Because that is the greatest most beautiful place to be that you can ever find. Here is where you are open to God’s healing.

I think you can look around at our present day culture and see clearly the driveness and the relentless go, go, do, do keep doing nature of our lives. Everyone says there’s just too much sports these days. The kids don’t have time to rest. Everybody says it. Everybody knows it. Can we change it? No. We are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. That is just so obvious, yet we just can’t change it can we? I know, I know, it’s too much, but then we just keep doing it. The crush of people going to the latest cool thing. Jesus and his disciples need a rest today, but their world is just like ours. It just keep coming up, more needs, more things we need to respond to. You can’t stop. And then when you do stop, it’s like you don’t like that, and so away you go again. It’s just so easy to see this in our culture. As long as you say, well I could stop if I wanted, then you won’t get it. You have to see the way this relentless driveness is some thing beyond our ability to do anything about. Now your getting there.

But there is an even bigger issue at work in our culture. Maybe we don’t have a problem with alchohol, or drugs, or busyness. But there is something that harasses us, something we are powerless to change on our own that we all deal with. You know what it is? I think it’s this. Our way of thinking. We just keep thinking the same way over and over and over and over again. We think about the problem the same way over and over and over again. It’s this thought process that we can’t get out of. What I want, what I like, what I prefer, what suits me, what I agree with. Judgements of others. Anger responses. You’re sitting here this morning. And it’s “I agree with that”, or “I don’t agree with that”. Or I like him. I don’t like him. I can’t control it. And it’s so automatic and it’s so relentless, and it’s so driven and so uncontrollable. It just happens and you can’t do anything about. I think that’s the main way that being a sheep without a shepherd works in our culture. It’s those same thoughts that go around and around and around and around and around that you just can’t change.

I am an anxious person. I really struggle with anxiety. And I read the bible verse where Jesus said, “Don’t be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take take of itself”. And it’s like I want that. So I say to myself, “OK, I’m going to try to not worry so much”. Might even take to God in prayer. Next morning, the first thing that happens when I wake up is that I’m gripped by anxiety. Years and years and it never changes. And it never get better. Oh, I”ve tried. I’ve prayed, I’ve done everything I can think of and I just can’t find the answer. Just stuck in my own thoughts about this. I keep trying.

But it rarely occurs to me what a great place I’m in. To discover that I’m powerless to change what needs to change. This is what our second lesson is all about. For years, hundreds of years there was a division between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews thought a certain way about Gentiles, and Gentiles thought a certain way about Jews. I mean you could have no more changed these peoples minds than anything. Yeah, we all know that “no ones going to change their mind”. My mind is made up. I like this, I don’t like that. I’m I charge, I’m in control. I’ve got it all figured out. And it’s just relentless. Black people think this way. White people think this way. Rural people think this way. City people think like that. Liberals think this. Convervatives think this. And we seem helpless, like sheep without a shepherd to do anything about it. O my Goodness. O my Goodness. What a great thing it is to discover this. How important to realize our need for help with something we seem powerless to change.

Our second lesson is even more miraculous that the Gospel. Somehow this thinking has been overcome by the power of Jesus Christ. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both group sot God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility with it. This is the greatest miracle the world has ever seen by far. This makes walking on water or raising the dead child’s play. Getting people to change their minds. To free people from how they have been thinking. I like this I don’t like that. Just all this automatic thought process that goes around and around. And isn’t really thought at all. Shepherdless.

Where are the areas in your life where you need help? Where you can’t, no matter how hard you try seem to make it better? That’s where the miracles are waiting to happen. Not much can happen until you give up. Give up trying. Give up controlling. Give up thinking the same way about it over and over again. Here is where we have the opportunity to touch the Shepherd. To give it to Him. Most of the time I think we ask for a certain outcome. But that’s not really giving the problem to God. That’s having God do your bidding. The healing here is just giving it over. Letting God have it. I think this healing is available to us today. Jesus said to his disciples, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while. Because that’s what does it. Stop trying. Let God do for you what you cannot do for yourself. It’s called letting go. Give it God in a way that God handles the outcome. God does the work of healing here. You do nothing, other than learn to rest. Relax. Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy landen and I will give you rest.

It’s not instantaneous. But like all the people in our lesson today, God will help you walk that journey. But it all begins in a very good place. When you realize that you need help, need a power that will help you do what you cannot do for yourself. And complete give it to God, and see what happens. Give up trying to control the outcome. That’s where it all begins to happen. Amen.