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Luke 8:43-48

Healing

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Luke 8:43-48 New Revised Standard Version

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.” When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

When I served as a pastor in the Methodist Church in England, the churches that I served had quarterly healing services. I was not used to healing services. It was not something that I had ever experienced in my church when I was growing up. I thought healing was only something that I would see on the television as televangelists would hit someone on the head and the person would fall back because they had been healed. It is important for us to know and to claim that our Bible strongly affirms healing, in fact the root of the word healing in New Testament Greek, sozo, is the same as that of salvation and wholeness. Spiritual healing is God’s work of offering us balance, harmony, and wholeness of body, mind, spirit and relationships. Through such healing, God works to bring about reconciliation between God and humanity, among individuals and communities, within each person, and between humanity and the rest of creation. Jesus himself healed the sick and sent out his disciples on ministries of healing.

At the very back of your Bible, the book of James calls us also to pray for and anoint the sick, that they may be healed. “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed” (James 5:14–16a).

All healing is of God. It is important for me to say that a healing service does not detract from the gifts God gives through medicine and psychotherapy. Worship today is no substitute for either medicine or the proper care of our health. My hope is that our worship today will add to our total resources for wholeness.

Healing is not magic, but underlying it is the great mystery of God’s love and when we pray for healing we are channeling God’s love. The nature of our world and our humanity means that suffering will happen, we will get cancer, we will have disease, we will have depression, we will get hurt by the church, we will get hurt by other people. God does not promise that we shall be spared suffering but does promise to be with us in our suffering. May we recognize God’s sustaining presence in pain, sickness, injury, and estrangement.

Thanks be to God that in every act of worship, the Church celebrates the grace of God who desires wholeness of body, mind and spirit for all people. We bring to God our own frailty and brokenness - felt not just in physical illness, but in guilt, anxiety and all the burdens which weigh us down. We also bring our concerns for others and for the world. Above all, we come to the God who knows our needs before we ask, and whose love revealed in Jesus Christ is stronger than suffering and death.

A healing service is not a service of curing, but provides an atmosphere in which healing can happen. When we pray for healing, we often mean that we want to get better. But the ultimate form of healing is to be reconciled with God in heaven. Healing means that we are reunited or reconciled with God and when that happens, physical healing may occur, mental and emotional balance may be restored, spiritual health is enhanced, and relationships are healed. As followers of Jesus the Christ, as Christians, spiritual healing is about renewing and strengthening our relationship with the living Christ.

For many of us prayer is healing, for many of us celebrating Communion is healing, the different thing about today’s worship is about you receive Communion Pastor Amber and I will be available if you would like to lay hands on you and anoint you with oil. Anointing the forehead with oil points beyond itself to the presence of the Holy Spirit and the healing Christ.

There is great power in touch. Jesus often touched others when he blessed children, when he washed feet, when he healed injuries or disease, and when he raised people from death. There is Biblical precedent as well as our natural desire to reach out and touch gently and lovingly those in need. It reminds us of the presence of the healing Christ. This week in Houston and the other areas affected by Hurricane Harvey we have seen rich and poor people rescuing each other. Republicans and liberals rescuing each other. Hispanics, whites, blacks, Asians, all forming human chains to help bring people to safety. We only have to open our eyes to see people who are Jesus’ hands and feet bringing salvation and wholeness to others.

I remember when I was a pastor in England. There was an older woman who had polio as a child and had used forearm crutches her entire life. Watching her walk looked so painful. But she walked up the aisle and knelt down on the altar rail for Communion wincing as she did. She would kneel in prayer for a long time and then with pain on her face she would stand up. I asked her once what she prayed for and she said, “For the strength for one more day.” She was in so much pain and she knew that God was with her.

She reminds me of the woman in our Bible story today. Jesus was on his way to heal the daughter of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, when he gets interrupted by this woman in the crowds who pushes her way through to touch Jesus. This woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, could not have been more different than Jairus. She is an unnamed woman, she has little to no power in general and even more so given her condition, who had to push through the crowds. She is just the woman who bled for twelve years. She had no advocate, no family, no community to go to Jesus on her behalf. She was very active in her healing because she had to advocate for herself. Jesus restores her to the community, calling her daughter and making her whole. She had spent all of the money that she had trying to get better. She endured twelve years of bleeding, of suffering, of disappointment, and expense, all to no avail.

Think about the the courage it took her to brave the crowds, expose herself to criticism, risk being ostracized for either her audacity or condition or both. Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, approach Jesus? Sure. This woman? No. But the woman and Jairus both had a profound human need and Jesus responds to need, anyone’s need. After Jesus figures out what happened that power had gone out of him, and after the woman had stepped forward in fear and trembling to admit her deed and her hope, Jesus gives her a new name, calling her daughter, calling her a person of great faith, and naming her healed.

Jesus is constantly crossing borders – whether geographic or social – to see people for who they are and to draw them into relationship. That’s why the woman who interrupts Jesus’ preaching and healing tour is no longer just “woman” or “the one who has been bleeding for twelve years.” She is now “daughter,” one restored to family and community and health and life.[[1]](#footnote-2)

This is Christ’s charge to us as well. To see people who for who they really are, unique persons, each created in the image of God, and each worthy of our attention, care, love, and respect. Christ calls us to leave the comfortable and familiar behind in order to reach out to others as brothers and sisters, all children of God.

We are all hurting in different ways, some of us have illness or injury, some of us have damaged or broken relationships, some of us have traumatic memories, or guilt or estrangement from God. Today is an opportunity for us to share the pain. As we share our own distress, we are expressing compassion, hope, grace, and our faith in God. We come seeking salvation and wholeness.

1. http://www.davidlose.net/2015/06/pentecost-5-b-known-and-named/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)