

## Jesus Heals

Today, as we continue to follow Jesus' footprints to the places of his ministry, we come to his ministry of healing. Naturally, we think of the people we know who are in need of healing. Perhaps you yourself are dealing with illness... and, no doubt, you could make a list of many family members and friends who are sick. There are those who are facing surgery or recovering from an operation, and others who are receiving treatment for cancer or another life-threatening illness. We think of people who live with chronic illness; long, on-going conditions that can be managed but not cured. Then, there are those who deal with depression and other mental illness... and alcoholism and drug abuse and other addictions... There's so much suffering all around us.

We ask ourselves, "What does the Bible say about healing?" Surely this is one of the most difficult questions we struggle with as Christians. We think of people we know who were sick, and after prayers for healing, they recovered. Others improved for a time, but then their illness returned. And still others continued to face worsening health, even despite many prayers offered on their behalf.

Today's Bible reading can help us as we struggle with these questions. It begins early in Jesus' ministry, as he's teaching a great crowd of people along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A respected leader in the local synagogue, Jairus, comes up to Jesus, and kneels before him, face in the dust, as a beggar would before a king. He pleads with Jesus: His young daughter is close to death at home. He beseeches Jesus to come and lay his hands upon her so that she will be made well, and live. We can imagine the anguish in Jairus' heart—his daughter... so deathly

ill... And Jesus, filled with compassion, immediately goes with Jairus, hurrying toward his home... and all the crowd follows.

Now, before they can get to Jairus' home, there's a woman in the crowd who is also ill. She's been hemorrhaging blood for 12 years. It's a chronic condition that leaves her constantly weak and out of breath, with barely enough energy to get through the day. She's gone to doctor after doctor, with no success, until she's used up all her money on doctor's bills. What makes her situation even more miserable is that in the culture of her times, she is regarded as unclean, just like a leper. She is not allowed to have any contact with another person, but rather, keep her distance. She cannot go to the marketplace, or visit in her friends' homes, or worship in the synagogue.

However, she has heard of Jesus, how he lays his hands upon people to heal them with God's healing power. She is sure that if she could just even touch his cloak, that would be enough to heal her... So, she presses through the crowd. She doesn't want to bother Jesus, to interrupt his important errand of mercy, so she just reaches out, and as soon as she touches his garment, the hemorrhaging stops, and she knows she's been healed. She slips away back into the crowd, but immediately Jesus stops, and looks around, and says, "Who touched my garments?"

Here we have Jesus' first words in this story. In fact, he only speaks 4 times. It's important to note his words, because they point to God's healing work in our lives.

So Jesus first asks, "Who touched my garments?" (Mark 5:30) Do you catch the depth of Jesus' love and caring in those words? He's not upset about someone touching his cloak, in fact, just the opposite... he's amazed at the faith of someone who would seek him out, who

would trust him so completely for healing. He wants to talk with this person, encourage them, help them know God's love for them more fully.

Here we have the first truth concerning healing. It begins with seeking Jesus. Seeking Jesus. And Jesus invites every one of us to approach him—it doesn't matter, our circumstances... if we are religious or we've been rebelling against God... if we're not even sure what to ask, or if we can easily put our needs into words... if our concern is small or if it is weighty... if we are a kid or a senior citizen or somewhere in between... Jesus promised: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7: 7-8)

How do we seek Jesus? The most obvious way is through our prayers... through our prayerful conversations with the Lord. One way we can express our prayers is by placing them in the prayer box. Everyone is invited to put prayer requests into this box, which is located on the Upper Room table in the back of the sanctuary, as you come into the church on Sunday morning. Then, during the week, Pastor Diane & I, will continue to pray for these needs.

Today, you may have noticed a slip of paper in the bulletin. You're welcome to write your thanksgivings and your prayer needs on this slip of paper. At the end of the service, you could bring it here to the front of the church, or you could place it in the basket in the back of the church. Note that if you write "private," on the front, I won't open it, knowing that this is something between you and God. If you don't write "private," then I will hold this lift this need up to the Lord during the week. Also, if it's something you would like to be included in our

church prayer chain, please write, “prayer chain” on it. That’s also true for using the prayer box any week.

Another opportunity for prayer also comes at the end of today’s service. Following the benediction, we will sing “Spirit Song.” Either during the singing of this song, or afterwards, we invite you to come to the altar to pray... feel free to stand or kneel. If you would like some time of silent prayer, come to the left side... Or, if you would like Pastor Diane & me to pray with you and anoint you, come to the right side... you may want to lift up prayers for yourself or for someone you know... you may want to seek Jesus, committing your life to him for the first time ever, or re-committing your life to him... So, feel free to come to the altar rail, or you can also pray in your seat... then, when you are ready, take your prayers into the world...

Seeking Jesus... we do that not only through our prayers, but also through reading the Bible, and listening for his voice and direction through the words of scripture.. And through other readings—devotional guides, spiritual books... our church library has so many good resources for deepening our relationship with the Lord.

The woman with the hemorrhage sought out Jesus for healing. And when he asked, “Who touched my garment?”, she approached him with fear & trembling, and knelt at his feet, with her head in the dust. But Jesus raised her up, and looked into her eyes, and spoke again, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” (Mark 5:34)

And here, we have the 2<sup>nd</sup> truth about healing: it’s centered on trusting Jesus. Trusting Jesus. What is the woman’s faith that has made her well? It’s not a list of religious beliefs, nor

a litany of good deeds that she has accomplished. Instead, her faith is trusting Jesus... entrusting her life into his hands.

So it is with us. Jesus invites us to trust him... to trust him to care for us each day... and especially in times of difficulty, illness, and distress. Sometimes, Jesus' care includes physical healing... it could be miraculous healing... it could be healing through the amazing skill of doctors & medical personnel... sometimes, Jesus' care is an easing of pain and the other symptoms of illness, even though the underlying cause continues... and sometimes, we cannot find signs of physical healing, but we sense a healing of our spirits, a peace in the midst of illness, a sense that God is with us, that God will never leave us alone, that we are loved more deeply than we can even comprehend.

So, seeking Jesus... trusting Jesus... the woman with the hemorrhage is healed.

And, just as all are rejoicing at the power of God, there comes a messenger to Jairus, the leader in the synagogue, to say that his young daughter has died. And the crowd is silent... absolutely silent... at this heavy news. Then, Jesus speaks, "Do not fear, only believe." Believe... trust... once again Jesus is inviting us to trust in him.

He continues on to Jairus' home. Then, Jesus, and 3 of his disciples, Peter, James & John, and Jairus & his wife, go into the girl's bedroom. And taking her by the hand, Jesus speaks for the 4<sup>th</sup> time: "Talitha cumi." (Mark 5: 41) Those are his actual words, in Aramaic, the everyday language which Jesus spoke. St. Mark wants us to pay particular attention, so he uses the original words. They mean, "little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately, she gets up and walks around and is hungry for something to eat.

“Talitha cumi.” “I say to you, arise.” Rising up from death to new life. Here we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> aspect of healing. Jesus invites us to new life in him. We see that in a physical way here in this account of healing. But there is also a deeper spiritual truth, that Jesus is the true source of new life, abundant life, everlasting life. When we commit our lives to Christ, even though we may struggle with difficult circumstances, deep inside we have the assurance that our life is now with Christ forever.

St. Paul puts it this way in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians 4: 16-18 (*The Message*):

“So we’re not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace... There’s far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can’t see now will last forever.”

Jesus raises us up to new life... and when our days on earth are over, he will take us by the hand, and say to us, “Talitha cumi,” “Arise!” and lead us home to heaven where we will be fully and completely healed at last.

And so, our service today draws to a close, but our prayers for healing continue. Prayers of seeking Jesus, prayers of trusting Jesus, prayer of receiving new life from Jesus. We will pray here at the altar, or at our seats... and then, when we are ready, take our prayers into the world. And as we do, “May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace.” Amen.