

EPIPHANY 5, FEBRUARY 7, 2021

Rev. Roger A. Erdman

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; Mark 1:29-39

Sermon Title: *Where Is the Healing?*

Prayer: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of [our] heart[s] be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, [our] Rock and [our] Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

Salutation: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:2)

Text: The Word from God through which the Holy Spirit comes to stir our hearts for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany of Our Lord is from our Gospel Reading: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the first chapter.

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, during the season of Epiphany, we get Gospel Readings in which Jesus is carrying out the activities of His public ministry. We see Jesus busy with things like preaching, teaching, and healing the sick. For example, take the readings from Mark chapter 1 we've had these last few weeks.

- Two weeks ago, we heard Jesus preaching, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying: *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel"* (1:15).
- Last week Jesus was in the synagogue teaching, and: *"He taught them as one Who had authority"* (1:22).
- Now this week we see Jesus healing the sick, healing Simon's mother-in-law. And, as our text says: *"He healed many who were sick with various diseases"* (1:34a).

I. Indeed, Jesus was very much engaged in preaching, teaching, and healing. But this raises the question: *"Is Jesus still doing these things today?"*

- Preaching? Yes, Jesus still today is preaching to us, proclaiming the Gospel of God. To be sure, He does it now through His preachers. For He says to His disciples: *"He who hears you hears Me"* (Luke 10:16a). So, there's the preaching.
- What about teaching? Yes, same thing. In Bible class and Confirmation class, the Lord opens our minds to understand the Scriptures. So that we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore, preaching and teaching – *yes* – Jesus still is doing these things today, through the ministry of His church.

But then that leaves healing. So, we ask:

- *“Where is that going on today?”*
- *“Has Jesus given up on the healing part?”*
- *“Was that only for back then, and that’s it?”*
- *“Is there nothing for us today?”*

And so, our theme question this morning: *“Where Is the Healing?”*

Certainly, we could use some healing. We’ve got people sick with various diseases. Maybe you yourself have been battling sickness. Maybe the members of your household. Perhaps you know people—friends, relatives, co-workers – who are afflicted with various ailments.

- Diseases of the body: cancer, stroke, heart disease, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, rheumatoid arthritis, and lest we not forget, COVID-19.
- Diseases of the mind: Alzheimer’s, Asperger’s, autism, bipolar disorder, clinical depression.

The list goes on and on. So where can we find the healing we need? Has Jesus gone out of the healing business?

Jesus certainly was doing that sort of healing back then. Look at today’s Gospel. Jesus goes to Simon Peter’s house, and Simon’s mother-in-law is lying there sick with a fever. What does Jesus do? He goes in where she was, takes her by the hand, and lifts her up. And her fever goes away.

But Jesus doesn’t stop there. That evening the whole city is gathering and bringing to Jesus all sorts of sick people, with all sorts of ailments. And Jesus heals them.

We might say:

- *“Well, good for them, but what about us?”*
- *“Where is the healing for us?”*

Now there are guys running around today, preying upon the weak, to take advantage of people’s desire for physical healing. These are the so-called faith-healers that are nothing but frauds.

Furthermore, these frauds are not the answer. So, if they’re not the ones where we can go for healing, then where can we go? Of course, we can take it to the Lord in prayer, and we do that. We do pray for the sick. We do that in the general prayer of the church, and we do it in our own individual prayers. We pray for those we know who are suffering with this or that illness.

And the good Lord, in His mercy, always does hear our prayers. And He answers them according to His will and for our own good. You see, our heavenly Father knows what's best for us:

- Sometimes what is best is that He heals us, relieves us of our sickness.
- Sometimes God delivers the healing through the skill and care of doctors. That type of healing, too, comes from God, and we give God the thanks and glory for healing through medical means.

But what about when the healing doesn't happen? What if we or the people we love stay sick? Why no healing then? We've prayed. We've tried the medical means. And still no healing. Has God abandoned us? This is what perplexes us. This is what causes us sorrow and angst.

First of all, here is why you can be sure that God has not abandoned you. God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you, to save you from your sins. So, look to the cross, and you will see the God Who loves you. St. Paul writes: "*He Who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32).

So, if God loves you that much, surely, He loves you in the midst of your sickness and infirmity.

It is worth noting that Jesus is on the way to that cross when He sets out on His public ministry. The healings He performs are thus signs of what His sacrifice on the cross will accomplish: total healing, the complete restoration of our body and soul in the kingdom of God. And here, Jesus is ushering in the kingdom of heaven here on earth. Therefore, these healings are advance signs of the ultimate result.

Just think of Simon's mother-in-law. It says that when Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up, the fever left her, "*and she began to serve them*" (v 31c). But what happened to her after that? Eventually she got sick again with something else, and she died.

II. So, then, where is the healing that lasts? Of course, you know the answer: It is in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. You see, God is committed to our complete and total healing. The healing of our body and soul and the restoration all creation. It will happen. It will come. When Jesus comes again.

Until that time, we wait. But we wait in hope. We wait with the sure guarantee that there is healing in store for our bodies. Where can you find that guarantee? In the sure and certain means that God has provided:

- In the Word.
- In the Sacraments.

These are the *means of grace*. These are the things you can count on. They come from God, and they have His promise attached.

Take the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, for example. The water is splashed over your head as the Word of God is spoken: *“I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* Here, God is claiming your whole person, body and soul, to be His beloved child forever.

Likewise, at life’s end, in our funeral service, we remember the Christian’s Baptism as we lay that body to rest. Having been buried with Christ by Baptism into death, *“we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His”* (Romans 6:5).

You see, Christ’s resurrection is a physical, bodily resurrection. And so is our resurrection. In the Creed we confess the resurrection of the body. And Holy Baptism bestows God’s pledge to raise us up bodily, whole and sound.

And then there is the Sacrament of the Altar, the Lord’s Supper. There, Christ’s body and blood is placed into your mouth. This is another physical, tangible *means of grace*. It’s another way God is telling you He will heal your body:

- The early church fathers recognized this. St. Ignatius called the Sacrament *“the medicine of immortality that we should live forever in Christ Jesus”* (Ignatius to the Ephesians 20:2).
- And again, Luther picks up on the physical nature of this sacrament also, praising the bodily benefit of the Sacrament of the Altar: *“It will cure you and give you life both in soul and in body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved”* (Large Catechism, Part V. The Sacrament of the Altar, 68).

Conclusion: Dear friends in Christ, Christ has redeemed you in both body and soul:

- He forgives your sins by His death on the cross.
- He foreshows the resurrection of your body by His own resurrection from the dead.

No, Jesus has not given up on the healing business! He has healing for you, dear brother, dear sister – perfect, total, everlasting healing.

Where is the healing?

- Look to the cross, where Christ forgave your sins.
- Look to your Baptism into Christ, the pledge of your resurrection.
- And look to the blessed Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, where Jesus grants your full and final healing.

So, where is the healing? Right here. *For you!*

In the name of † Jesus, Who forgives all your sins. Amen.

To God alone the Glory!