

Faith Healing
Proper 8 - Year B - 06/27/2021
Psalm Reading: 30
1st Reading: Lam. 3:22-33, 2nd: Mark 5:21-34

In our Bible Study last Wednesday we did a little exercise I learned to do in Seminary where someone reads a passage of the Bible and you close your eyes and try to imagine the scene with all of your senses.

There is a way to do this without someone reading it to you. Read it over five times, just looking for clues to what you might perceive with each sense. This only really works for scenes in the Gospels or Acts or some of the histories in the Old Testament, but it is a way that you can connect more fully with what the Spirit is trying to tell you.

Our reading for today is about two healings by Jesus and in it you might...

Hear: Voice of Jesus, murmur of the crowd, amazement

See: People in Robes, the lake shore, boat, nets, road

Touch: people jostling together, woman felt flow of blood, fear, trepidation, curiosity. "Took her by the hand."

Taste: dust in the air.

Smell: Dead fish on the shore, smell of a pier.

Helps bring the message to life for us.

Jesus heals two people. You will notice something interesting about both of these cases. Jesus tells the woman in

verse 34, “Daughter, your faith has healed you...” and when Jairus is told that his daughter has died, Jesus tells him, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.” In both cases, then, we find a common theme. Faith is a factor in their healing. Yes, it is the power of God that brings healing to them, but they have participated in an active way in the healing.

I want to begin this discussion by saying that whether a person is physically healed after prayer is not an indication of a person’s faith. Faith is a factor, but not the only factor. God’s will is the primary of these factors. Though we can be healed on the spot by God, I believe God’s ultimate design is most often orchestrated through the laws that govern the universe. I think that healing is a miraculous thing that can happen to us when we are ill. It is miraculous then no matter how we perceive it coming about. And physical healing may not come about. As we Christians often say, “Let it be God’s will, not our will.”

I also want to stress that healing comes in many forms. It may be a physical healing. But it might also be a spiritual healing, healing that brings to us the comfort of Christ’s presence and fills us with the love of God, dispelling anxiety and bringing about reconciliation between us and others or even us and God.

For the woman who touched the robe of Jesus it was her faith that healed her, as Jesus said, and the power flowed through him. It happened the way God would have it happen. It revealed the power of God in the world in a dramatic way. As John would call such miracles in his Gospel, it was a sign that was not only wrought of faith, but engendered faith in those

around her and once written about brought faith to many more.

I think we forget sometimes the miraculous ways that God works in the world. Human's are God's instruments, and the work of a surgeon, the care of a nurse, the research of a scientist all come about through the work of God. No matter their own faith, people in the medical field are, indeed, doing the Lord's work.

For me, a case in point would be the vaccine for the Corona virus, and not just for this virus, but the vaccine for small pox, and the vaccine for polio, and so many other diseases. Penicillin was an amazing discovery. The advancement of medical science is, no doubt, God's will. But just think how the Covid vaccine came about. Yes, it built on previous research, but that research came about because God made us in the image of God and gave us the ability to understand the technical aspects of our existence here on this planet and within the universe.

Joke about the man in the flood...Sometimes God's miracle is us.

Cures can extend life. Even the development of good sanitation has, unbeknownst to most, extended the lives of most of humanity. This is something we seldom thank God for because it has become so commonplace in our lives. We are more likely to look forward with fear to the dangers ahead than we are to thank God for all we have been given in the past.

Isaac Newton, one of the great physicists of history, believed that when he studied mathematics, physics, and optics, he was learning about, even discovering, the mind of God. It was this that drove him to do his research. I believe this is what God wants for us, to continue to discover, to continue to move forward in all areas of science. I have a sense that such discoveries move hand in hand with faith to bring us ever closer to God, ever closer to that day when God will bring together the new Heaven and the new Earth.

Miraculous medical cures have real world consequences, and this brings us back to our reading. We find that what Jesus does in the world has real world consequences as well. And these consequences radiate out to every economic class. Jesus performs two miracles in this passage. He heals someone at the top of the economic scale and a person at the bottom. When healing, Jesus shows no preferences. He does not care that one person could get him in good at the synagogue and the other has no wealth, no pull, anywhere.

In fact, with his healing of the woman, he demonstrates how truly far God will go to touch humanity, and allow humanity to touch God. First, we have to understand that the woman with the flow of blood would have been considered to be unclean. Anyone who touched her or had been touched by her would be considered unclean. Yet Jesus did not rebuke her for touching him; he did not consider himself in any way unclean. In fact, he tells her that her action has healed her. So we find out that she does not make Jesus unclean, but in healing her from her flow of blood, that Jesus does make her clean. Cleanliness flows from him as a by-product of his healing.

This is a powerful sign of the power of Christ, of the power of God in the world.

It is at this point in the story that Jairus, the synagogue leader, receives a messenger. He is told that his daughter who had been sick is dead. It would seem that the case is hopeless. But Jesus goes to the man's house and raises the girl from the dead, taking her cold, damp, hand in his and pronouncing the words, "*Talitha Koum!*"

I think it is this raising of the girl from the dead that extends to all of us a promise, no matter who we are. It is showing to us that Christ has the power to lift us up. It is a promise that we are never truly dead and that Christ is here to save us. Ultimately, whatever happens to us, Christ will take our hand, and bring us to his father's house to live with him forever.

I think the essence of our understanding of this passage is that humans participate in the healing process. But we are still subject to God's Providence.

You see, there is always healing when we come in contact with God. There is always healing when we practice our faith: whenever we kneel by the bedside in heartfelt-fervent prayer, when we are picking up trash as we walk down the sidewalk, or when we forgive a family member for something they should not have said, or hold someone's hand in the hospital and ask the Lord to relieve them from their affliction, or when we just talk with a friend after a service at church. Yes, we are participating in the healing power of God through our faith.

In all these circumstances and so many more we may:
Hear the words of God.

Get a whiff of holiness in the air.
Taste the goodness wrought through activity.
See the people uplifted.
And feel the power of faith...healing

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Resources:

Werner H. Kelber. *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Kindle Location 278). Kindle Edition.

Mark 5:21–43 *Feasting on the Word: Year B, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season after Pentecost 1* (Propers 3-16) (*Feasting on the Word: Year B volume*) (Kindle Locations 6325-6326).

Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

NIB, Vol. 8, 586-590.

Barclay, *Gospel of Mark*, 5:21-43.

Isaac Newton, *In the Presence of the Creator*