

**“Healing and Wholeness”
Luke 5:17 – 26; James 5:14 – 16**

So to kick things off this morning, let me ask, ***what do these passages have in common?***

Have a chat to the person beside you and then we’ll go from there.
There is of course the mention of healing, found although Scripture.

The definition of Scripture is that it is God’s Word to all people, in all places, for all times.

And out of 3,774 verses in the four New Testament Gospels, 484 relate specifically to healing of all kinds that Jesus did.

But Scripture isn’t written simply so we can read what happened.
It’s not so we can look back and read about what Jesus did for other people then but sorry, you’ll miss out because you were born in the wrong century.

The same Jesus who healed and we read about in Scripture, is that same who is at work in our world today through the Holy Spirit.

I do not believe that Scripture teaches that healing was only for the first century.

So I want to say first up, I believe that healing is for today.

I don’t know about you, but I do still hear stories of people being cured in a way that only be described as miraculous.

“Do you know of anyone who has been unexplainably healed, apart from Jesus?”

What we might call miraculous.

It could be you. It could be someone in your family or in church.
It could be this church or a previous one.

Tell the person next to you.

I do.

His name was Matt and he was a good friend in high school. Matt suffered terribly from debilitating recurrent migraines so that he would have to darken his room during daytime and lie absolutely still. For days on end he was incapacitated. He couldn't do anything or function well at all. He described it as being a like a belt being pulled excruciatingly tight around his head. And these went on for years.

Matt, he wasn't a Christ follower but one day at school a teacher who knew of his condition said to him, "Hey, we have this guy coming to the area and one of ways God uses him is in the area of healing. Do you want to come along?"

Matt had to nothing to lose so he went along to the meeting. And was everything he imagined and worse: people singing with the hands raised, and people speaking in tongues and then the speaker got up to speak.

The speaker had a word of knowledge – a word of insight given by God. He said, "There's someone here and you suffer from migraines. It's like someone had tied a belt excruciatingly tight around your head and Jesus wants to heal you."

So Matt went forward and he was prayed for and he has not had a migraine since.

Now some will ask, "What about medical treatment?"
Should we forgo it in the place of healing that comes from God?

Well, Luke whose wrote this passage about the paralysed man, was a what? What profession? He was a... doctor.¹ And continued to be a doctor even after seeing these miracles.

So medical healing and supernatural healing aren't in competition but complement each other.

Is Jesus though only interested in physical healing?

Well it's interesting that both passages mention... forgiveness.

A person with a broken arm or leg is easy to see and get sympathy. But a person with broken heart or a broken relationship or a hurting soul is often hidden.

¹ Colossians 4:14.

There are people with scars and wounds you cannot see.
They're crippled in a different way.

Sometimes it's self-inflicted; sometimes we have been wounded by others.

And think that God doesn't just want to physically healed bodies but leave sick souls.

In the case of the paralysed man was when he was brought to Jesus, Jesus did not begin by talking about his paralytic state.

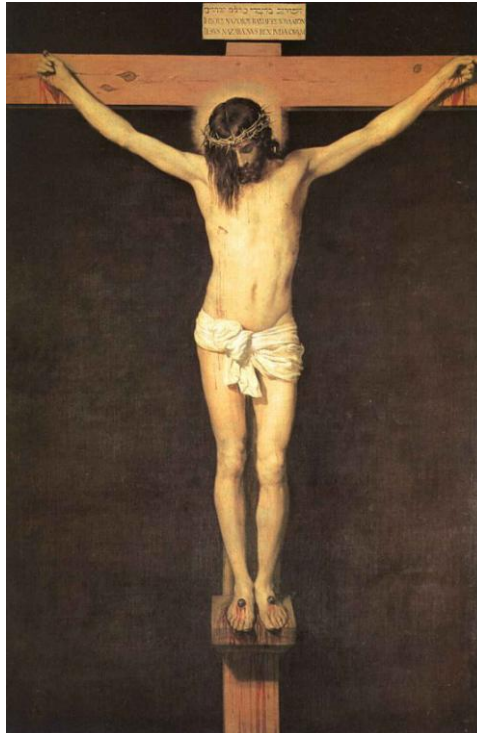
Jesus looked deep into this man and saw that what he needed more than anything else was pardon.
His primary need was forgiveness.

(Which, by the way, is not to say in any way that every illness is related to sin).

In the Jewish mind the hope for a person and community was shalom or wholeness or flourishing of the whole human person.
That's what they believe God, the Lord, intended for all humans.
Physical yes, and also emotional, spiritual, social and material.

For some people it may be guilt but for others it's shame.
Increasingly shame is
And shame is deep wound in people's souls, this deep sense of humiliation and unlovableness.

Is this accurate?



What's inaccurate?

Yeah, Jesus was crucified naked. He was shamed.

And Jesus took our sin on himself on the cross, and he also took our shame. In taken our shame he imbues us with new dignity and worth and value.

So Jesus he wants to heal body and soul.

This pastor writes.

One morning, on impulse, as I ended the service I said to the congregation that if anyone wanted to remain behind for healing, I would be glad to pray for them. I told them they shouldn't expect much to happen, because nothing much happens when I pray, but if they wanted to give it a try, I'd be willing to pray as hard as I could.

Surprisingly, about thirty people stayed behind and waited patiently as I prayed for one after the other.

I did not want to do this healing thing fast, like some of the healers I see on television. I wanted to really talk to a person before I prayed and get a feel for what was on that person's heart. I wanted to hug each person and connect with him or her as deeply as I knew how. I did that with each of the people who stayed behind, and in each case I put some olive oil that I had brought along with me on each of their heads.

It took me more than an hour to pray through that little group. But I did it!

What intrigued me was that most of the people who had come for healing had nothing physically wrong with them. One man needed healing for an addiction to pornography. One woman wanted healing for her marriage. Someone else asked healing for anger. But there were a few who did have physical illness.

Four days later I had a telephone call, and the woman at the other end said, "On Sunday you prayed for my husband. He had cancer."

When I heard the word "had" my heart quickened a bit. "*Had* cancer?" I asked.

The woman answered, "Well, he's dead."

Then the woman went on to say, "You don't understand. When my husband and I walked into that church on Sunday, he was angry with God. He had cancer and knew he was going to be dead soon, and he hated God for letting it happen. He wanted to see his grandchildren grow up more than anything. At night he would lie in bed and curse God. It was horrible. And the angrier he got toward God, the meaner he was to everyone around him. It was unbearable to be in the same room with him.

His nastiness just kept on getting worse and worse and worse.

But then you laid hand on him on Sunday morning and prayed for him.

When he walked out of the church I knew there was something different. I could feel it. *He was a different person*. The last four days of our lives have been the best four days we've ever had together. We talked and laughed.

We even sang hymns with each other. It was a good, good time.

She paused, then added something really profound.

She said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed." ²

So these passages have healing, which also includes inner healing that in these passages is in the form of forgiveness.

Did anyone here notice *faith*?

In both of these passages faith is involved.

Faith isn't trying really hard to generate feelings that you don't just have.

It's not pretending.

So what is it?

In the healing of the paralysed man it says that Jesus saw their faith.

² Tony Campolo, *Let Me Tell You a Story* (USA: W Publishing, 2000), 34 – 36.

What did Jesus see?

Did he see them screwing up their eyes, trying really hard to believe?
Did he see a look of absolutely certainty in the eyes of the four men?

So what did Jesus see?

We talked about faith a couple of weeks ago.

We saw then, that faith is believing certain things about God, it is trusting in God and it is giving allegiance to God's king who is Jesus.

I also said then that faith is a *verb*.

What Jesus saw in the four friends was *action*.

Faith is acting on what we believe.

Faith is trust expressed in activity.

And in James, where is the faith expressed in action?

"Is any one of you sick? He or she should [what?]... *call* the elders of the church to pray over you and anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord."

Calling the elders and asking them to pray is an act of faith.

Faith in God to heal can be the smallest act.

By the way, are the elders the only ones who can pray for healing?

Absolutely not; they move in that area as those watch over and care for God's people but any believer can pray for healing.

It's an area anyone can move in as Spirit empowers.³

So this morning there is an opportunity to be prayed for in the area of healing.

The elders and others will be here at the front to pray for you.

We're going to sing and during the time of singing I invite to respond by coming forward where we'll pray for you.

³ 1 Corinthians 12:9