

June 28, 2009

Scripture: Mark 5: 21-43

Sermon: "Be Made Well"

To be made well. That is what all of us want. To have our bodies in great working condition. To not have aches and pains. To be able to get out of bed in the morning without the creaks, cracks, and groins. To be made well. That is what all of us hope for every time we go to the doctor's office. To find a cure, to find something that will make us well.

I struggled with preaching on a sermon about healing when we all know people or are ourselves struggling with something that is hurting and we want to be made well. And then I realized that after talking with a very wise man that the healing that Jesus is offering in this Scripture goes beyond physical healing. The healing that Jesus is offering to both this unnamed woman and Jairus is a healing that makes one whole through relationships, through care, and through faith. All week, I have struggled with how to I talk about people who were made well through physical contact with Jesus when there are people among our very own congregation that have dealt with and lived with physical pain and illness. What was the good news there? "Sorry, you're out of luck because you didn't live two thousand years ago and you are not able to physically touch the man called Jesus. Sorry, you have to live with your illness because Jesus cannot actually touch you and heal you. Sorry, there is nothing that can be done because we don't have Jesus physically around today."

Where is the good news in that?

So all week, I struggled with how do you preach a sermon about healing when you don't actually have the physical, real to the touch, pinch him to see if he is real Jesus standing in our midst.

Until a conversation with a very wise man...This man had just been given the news that there was nothing more the doctors could do. It was too risky to operate, due to his age and his weakened condition. When he shared this information with me, I sat in stunned silence for a few minutes and then said, "Surely, there has got to be something, something the doctors have tried, something more that the doctors can do...Surely, there is something... someone can do..."

The man told my hand and simply said, "If it is my time to go, then it is my time to go. The Good Lord has watched over me for years and I have seen more than I could imagine. I have watched my children grow up and have children of their own, and even watch a few of those children have children. I have had the love of a wonderful, gracious kind woman for over fifty years. I have lived a good life. I have even lived longer than what the doctors thought I would live. If it is my time, then it is my time."

And all I could say was But...there has to be something that can be done to make you well...It is not over...There has to be something that can be done to make you well...

And this man simply smiled and said, "Yes, there is. Sure, we will keep seeing the doctors and trying everything we can do medically. But I know that God is with me. I have faith and I trust

that God will continue to be with me. I know that I have lived a good life and that I have experienced God's grace in my life."

And as I left the hospital, grieving with and for this family, I realized that this man had been made well, that this man had been made whole, that this man had been healed. Because he had faith in God. Because he trusted in God. Because he knew that God was with him. Because he knew that God had saved him and restored him.

Because this man knew that God's grace had touched his life, changed his life, and made him whole. God's grace had made this man well.

And I realized that was the healing that Jesus offered to the people in our Scriptures today, to this man in the hospital room and to us today. Jesus is offering an opportunity for us to realize that there is healing beyond physical healing, that we are given opportunities to be made well through the relationships in our lives, that God's grace fills our lives and makes whole. The healing that Jesus provides for us as people of faith comes in the form of peace, comes in the form of comfort, and in the form of hope. Hope to be restored, hope to be recognized, hope to be renewed, hope to be made well.

In our Scripture today, there are two lost souls in need of healing. One is a woman who has tried everything to be made whole. She has used all of her money searching for a cure and now is in worse shape than before. There is no hope except for an encounter with Jesus, just a touch of his robe and maybe she will be made well.

As she reaches out her hand and touches the robe, she is made well, but Jesus will not let the healing end as simply a physical healing. He turns and wants to know who touched him. The woman comes forward and experiences God's grace, experiences God's love, and is truly healed and made whole.

Jesus restores her soul. He soothes the aches of her heart and he mends the brokenness of her soul. And lets her know that it is her faith in God that made her well, that her faith made her open to the possibilities of God, that her faith in God restored her.

And the other lost one is a young girl who is dying. We hear from the desperate pleas from her father that only Jesus can save her. And on their way to this young girl's house, the father gets word that the young girl has died and to not bother with bringing Jesus.

And Jesus turns to Jairus and says "Keep believing. Trust." And once again, Jesus will not let this healing of the young girl simply be a physical healing. He restores the family's spirits. He mends their broken hearts. He soothes their aches of the heart. He opens their eyes to the possibilities of God's grace and God's love. He provides healing that makes this family whole. And that is our lesson today. We are invited to encounter the Risen Lord in our lives and experience the healing that comes through God's grace and God's love. We are invited to see that "our acts of faith do not activate the power of God. Instead the acts of faith [are] receptive responses to the activating power of God through Jesus Christ to healing and wholeness." We are invited to be made well through God's grace and God's love that fill our lives and our world.

We as disciples of Christ are not guaranteed a perfect smooth life. We as Christians are not promised perfect health. We as believers have no guarantees that we will not face illnesses. But what we do have as Christians are eyes of faith and that “through the eyes of faith, we are able to see a God present in our sufferings, a God who suffers with us, a God of the living, a God of infinite possibilities, a God of hope, a God who will raise us to eternal life,” a God who says that this world does not have the last word.

There is a healing, a wholeness that comes from God’s grace and God’s love that cannot be manufactured, that cannot be found in pill form that cannot be injected in our bodies. It is a gift from God, a gift that comes with no strings, no obligations, and no dangerous side effects.

We have the gift of grace from our God who loved us so much that God poured out God’s own self for us, whose very peace is the balm for all of our aches of the heart, the creaks of our souls, and the cracks of our brokenness. We are given the chance to understand that Jesus offers us healing and that healing is “the restoration of meaning to [our] lives, no matter what [our] physical condition[s] might be.”

And all we have to do is open ourselves to the opportunities of grace that fill our lives and allow them to make us whole, and allow them to make us well.

Allow God’s grace to soothe the aches of our hearts, allow God’s love to silence the creaks of our souls, and allow God’s mercy to mend the brokenness of our very beings.

And then we can proclaim that we have been made well.

May we continue to see this world through the eyes of faith and experience God’s grace that brings us healing. Amen.

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