

Do You Want to Be Healed? Service of Anointing for Healing

John 5:1-14

Do you want to be healed? Do you want to get well? It would seem like such a question would have an obvious answer. Like asking are you ready for Spring? Most of us would say yes, but I guess there some persons who love the cold weather.

Hang in there, I know the focus today is on football, but there are only 19 days until pitchers and catchers report for Spring training!

Jesus asks the question: "do you want to be healed?" Jesus' question gets to the heart of the issue for this man who had been lying by the pool for 38 years. Do you WANT to be healed?

There are many things which can hinder the healing process. Sometimes we may be aware of what those things are and sometimes we have questions because we don't understand why there seems to be no healing. Sometimes we hold a false view of healing thinking of it as only an instantaneous event...or that God's healing can come in only one way.

It reminds me of the story of the high school teacher who would put a difficult math problem on the board and asked students to come up to the board and solve it. One time after putting up a particularly difficult problem on the board, he asked the class if anyone could solve it. One student raised his hand, came up to the blackboard, looked at the problem then took the eraser and erased the problem away. There are times when we look at healing that way. We want an instant solution and we ask God to wipe our problems away.

And yet we know that God does heal. God can bring healing to our physical bodies, God can bring emotional healing to our minds and God also brings spiritual healing to our souls. We believe that it is the touch of Jesus that makes us whole.

You cannot read the Scriptures or examine the life of Jesus or the early church without being impressed with the number of references to healing.

Listen to the Psalmist cry in Psalm 30:

I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit.

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Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name.

For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Psalm 103 (Our call to worship)

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

What I want us to focus on this morning is that healing comes many different ways and different forms. It may not occur in the time frame we envision, it may not occur in the manner we expect and or what we may be praying for, may not be the solution we are longing for, but God wants to set us free from the things that bind us, the things that hold us back from experiencing all that God wants for us. And so we pray for God's healing...mind, body, and spirit. We pray for the healing that makes us whole.

I think sometimes we tend to shy away from the subject of healing, maybe because of the abuses and misuses we've seen or heard about by faith healers and TV preachers, or perhaps just our own skepticism. I like what theologian Paul Tillich had to say about this: The gospels, certainly are not responsible for this disappearance of power in the picture of Jesus. They abound in stories of healing; but we are responsible ministers, laypersons, and theologians who forgot that Savior means "healer", he who makes whole and sane what is broken and insane, in body and mind.

Savior, salvation, healing, really come from similar root words that express the idea of being made whole. Being made whole, our relationship with God made right, salvation is about wholeness...and we talk about being saved not only from the things of the world that have broken our spirits, but also a salvation that will last for all eternity.

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Well, look at this man. This man lying at the pool called Bethesda. He has been lying there for 38 years. Can you imagine that – 38 years waiting for a healing. Just waiting for the moving of the water. One of the Jewish beliefs in that day related to the pool of Bethesda was that at certain times, an angel of the Lord would stir the water, and whoever stepped first after the angel stirred the water, would be healed of their disease.

That plan wasn't working for this man. For one thing, he couldn't get someone to put him in the pool on time. And you have to wonder from Jesus' question whether the man was making excuses for his problem. For Jesus asks him: Do you want to be healed? Who knows what was going on in the heart and mind of this man, but first and foremost was the need to acknowledge his willingness to be changed. Perhaps this man had either resigned to his condition or even had become so used to the way things were, he couldn't see himself in different circumstances. Do you want to be healed? Do you want to get well?

Really, that's the question we need to consider this morning. Whether it's a physical condition that's been holding you down, or an emotional need that we've been struggling with, something that has been stifling your relationship with God. Or is it a spiritual issue, you have been struggling with the need for forgiveness...God's forgiveness in your life, or your need to forgive someone else. Holding on to these things, it's like carrying a heavy weight with you all the time. Picture a person wearing a bowling ball as necklace. Seems crazy, but we won't let it go. These are the things that we carry, and the weight of them can become overwhelming or even unbearable. And we hear Jesus saying to us: Do you want to be healed...do you want to be set free, do you want to experience wholeness, peace in your heart and soul.

Then Jesus speaks to this man...Take up your pallet and walk. Jesus required the sick man to do something...he asked him to take a step of faith, to act upon his faith in order to experience the healing of God.

And so today I invite you to take that step of faith if there is a need for healing in your life. No matter what the problem, no matter whether its physical, emotional, or spiritual. So often we are held in bondage by our problems and we need to give them to God. It is the hand of Jesus that can touch us, give us hope, set us free, make us whole.

I know last weekend you had the opportunity to hear from those who went on the trip to the Holy Lands and what an inspirational and

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enlightening trip that it was. I had the opportunity to travel there in 1997...to see the sites, to visit the places where Jesus walked. As we visited various sites, different people from the group read the Scripture passage that spoke of that site. Just outside the city wall in Jerusalem are the pools of Bethesda. The pools are still there after all these years. When we came to that site, it was my turn to read. And so I had the privilege of reading today's passage from John chapter 5. After our visit to the pools, we went into the church next to the pools and had a service of healing. What beautiful sounds and tones were made as the group sang worship choruses that echoed off of the stone structure. And we offered prayers for healing. We named people from our churches and families. It was such a powerful and meaningful experience.

This morning I want us to be given to the opportunity to pray for one another and to seek the healing touch of God. Jesus offers the question: Do you want to be healed? As you come forward for communion today, Hey Young and I will also be available to you to receive anointing for healing. There is nothing magical in the anointing, nothing in the oil but anointing with oil is a Biblical symbol of God's healing presence. Like the Psalmist you said: Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over, or the book of James that speaks of the elders praying for the sick and anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. It is just putting ourselves in a posture of openness before the Lord, taking that step of faith and praying for the healing touch of God. If there is a need for healing in your life today, physical, emotional, or spiritual, and you would like to be anointed with a healing prayer. Just slip of your hand at the table and we will come to you, anoint you with oil, and offer a brief healing prayer. God's healing may not come in the way you expect it or in the time frame you would like, but the important thing is submitting ourselves to the healing presence of God and allowing God's Spirit to begin his healing work within you.