

## Healing and Wholeness

Mark 5:7-13, James 5:13-16

You can't read the Scriptures without being impressed with the number of references to healing. Healing events take up more than one-fifth of the passages in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Today's passage from the book of Mark shows us that part of the ministry of the 12 was a ministry of healing and anointing with oil. And as you study the Scripture passages on healing, it becomes clear that healing is not just about the physical body, but that healing is also a spiritual matter. These healing texts reveal that God desires to bring about healing, that people would experience wholeness of mind, body and spirit.

Some years ago there was a widely published news report about a conclusion reached by a former professor of Harvard Medical School. He pointed out that there are illnesses that we have been cured of without even knowing that we had them. He cited many instances of post-mortem examinations that revealed unmistakable traces of diseases which the body had conquered without persons even knowing they had them. This professor concluded that the human body is biased in favor of life, and he identified this healing process as the work of God within us.

I think most of us would agree that the healing process is a great mystery. That there is a lot we do not understand about healing. We ask questions like: "Why does God appear to heal some persons and not others? Why do some healings seem to come about almost instantaneously while others may come over a period of months, or even years? And of course, as much as we would like to find answers to these questions, we know there are no easy answers and healing remains a mystery. The other aspect of healing is that when you speak of healing it's not just about the physical healing of the body. We are created as mind, body, and spirit. So there can be aspects of our lives where we are in need of emotional healing. We have been bruised by personal trials and adversity, we sometimes are haunted by memories of our past and we seek the Lord to touch our minds and emotions. A man by the name of Norman Cousins tells of being hospitalized with a rare, crippling disease. When he was diagnosed as incurable, Cousins checked out of the hospital. Aware of the harmful effects that negative emotions can have on the body, Cousins reasoned the reverse was true. So he rented some comedy movies as a prescription for his own treatment.

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Movies about Marx Brothers and old "Candid Camera: reruns. Some of you remember these. It didn't take long for him to discover that 10 minutes of laughter provided two hours of pain free sleep. Amazingly, his debilitating disease was eventually reversed. After the account of his victory appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine, Cousins received more than 3000 letters from appreciative physicians throughout the world. Who knows how much of an impact our emotional state has on our well-being.

And there is also spiritual healing, where our own brokenness and sinfulness has caused our spiritual life to suffer and we need God's forgiveness and grace to restore us to a right relationship with God. As we sing in that old spiritual: "There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole; there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul."

Having said all this it becomes apparent that this whole matter of healing is an important matter of our faith. And so we in faith call upon the Lord and ask for God's healing. We pray that for that healing touch of God in our lives. We believe that God wants to be whole and so today we specifically are calling this service of worship a service of healing and wholeness. The root of the word for healing in Greek is "sozo". It is the same root for "salvation" and "wholeness". When we talk about spiritual healing we are seeking for God to be at work in bringing persons to a place of balance and harmony, into wholeness of mind, body, and spirit.

So there are many types of healing? But at the foundation of our Christian faith is that healing is of God. That doesn't mean that medicine, counseling, and many other types of caring services aren't important. Actually they are very important. They are often the means, the instruments of healing that God uses. But in whatever way healing may come we believe God has made it possible.

Let me offer a few ways we may find the healing touch of God. Sometimes healing may come from the release of something that has been hindering our well-being. It could be related to the stress we are holding onto. We feel overwhelmed or overburdened by life's challenges and circumstances. And to find healing, we must be able to surrender these burdens to the Lord. We are tempted to try to carry them on our own, but the weight and the stress

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becomes more than we are equipped to carry and it can cause all kinds of problems for us, emotionally and physically.

Another way we may find healing is by coming to terms with a strained relationship or a personal bitterness or grudge we may be carrying. Resentment, bitterness, an unforgiving spirit can cause a lot of damage to our minds, bodies and spirits. And healing won't come until we are willing to let go of the bitterness, find a place of forgiveness in our hearts, make reconciliation and restore relationships where possible.

And what about spiritual healing? It has so much to do with the attitude of our hearts. When we are willing to confess that which is hindering our relationship with God and surrender it to the Lord, then we can find God's forgiveness, and peace in our hearts and our relationship with God where it needs to be. One of the greatest healings is finding that new life in Christ, where we have reconciled with God because of our turning to Jesus who makes that restoration possible.

And so we come today, seeking God's healing touch. It's important to understand that healing is not magic, but there is great mystery in it. God does not promise to remove all of our suffering, but does promise to be with us in our suffering. It is that strength and presence of God that sustains us in times of sickness, pain, and injury. And that God does not promise that we will be cured of all sicknesses and diseases. As a praying congregation, we have prayed many times for healing and we have seen some glorious healings, persons who give witness and testimony of how the Lord healed them, restored them, made them whole. But we have also prayed and didn't see the answer we were looking for and we are reminded that all of us face the inevitability of death. As people who call ourselves Easter people, we believe that one day we will know that final healing in our death because of Jesus' resurrection. We have celebrated in funeral and memorial services that kind of healing even as we have prayed for family and friends left behind. Through it all, we place ourselves into the loving care of an almighty and everlasting God. And so we come today to pray for ourselves, and to pray for one another as we seek the healing touch of God.

We will conclude our service today with a time of prayer and anointing. We

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anoint with oil as a sign of the healing love of God. In the early church, they called the elders to pray for those who were sick and anointed them oil in the name of the Lord. We invite you to come forward if you sense a need God's healing in your life. It may be a physical concern, a particular health issue, It may be for the healing of emotions, emotions that have been damaged by life's tough experiences. It may be for a spiritual healing, seeking to get your heart right with God, placing yourself In God's hands so that your relationship with the God is where it needs to be. Whatever the need, whether for yourself, or healing for someone you know in need. Come forward and either Pastor Hey Young or I will anoint you with oil and offer a brief word of healing. The important thing is opening your heart to God and allowing God to have his way in your heart and life.

Invitation

Singing of Songs

Come for yourself or someone in need. Seek God's healing of mind, body, and spirit.