

“Healing Moments”

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron
August 16, 2020 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

Hymns for Worship Video – August 16, 2020

“Be Still and Know” #64 in the Book of Praise – All verses
(Words adapted for consistency with the Book of Praise)

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God

I am the Lord that healeth thee
I am the Lord that healeth thee
I am the Lord that healeth thee

In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust
In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust
In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust
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“When Jesus the Healer Passed Through Galilee” #203 in the Book of Praise – Vv. 1, 4, 6, 7
(Words adapted for consistency with the Book of Praise)

V. 1 When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee
Heal us heal us today
The deaf came to hear and the blind came to see
Heal us Lord Jesus

V. 2 When blind Bartimaeus cried out to the Lord
Heal us heal us today
His faith made him whole and his sight was restored
Heal us Lord Jesus

V. 6 The twelve were commissioned and sent out in twos
Heal us heal us today
To make the sick whole and to spread the good news
Heal us Lord Jesus

V. 7 There’s still so much sickness and suffering today
Heal us heal us today
We gather together for healing, and pray
Heal us Lord Jesus

Peter D. Smith

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“I Know not Why Such Wondrous Grace” #683 in the Book of Praise – All verses

(Words adapted for consistency with the Book of Praise)

I know not why God's wondrous grace
To me God hath made known
Nor why unworthy as I am
Christ claimed me for his own
But I know whom I have believe-ed
And am persuaded that Christ is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto him against that day

I know not why this saving faith
To me God did impart
Nor how believing in the word
Brought peace into my heart
But I know whom I have believe-ed
And am persuaded that Christ is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto him against that day

I know not how the Spirit moves
Convincing me of sin
Revealing Jesus through the word
Creating faith in him
But I know whom I have believe-ed
And am persuaded that Christ is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto him against that day

Daniel Webster Whittle | James McGranahan

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Scripture Texts: Genesis 45:1-15

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹ Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. ¹⁰ You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

¹² "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³ Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

¹⁴ Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

Matthew 15:21-28

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁷ "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Meditation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I cannot begin to count how often healing comes up in passages on which I am to preach. We find it everywhere in the Bible, both testaments. It comes in all forms – physical, spiritual, emotional. God wants his people to be whole and so the healing that is offered is whole. How often have we seen Jesus perform a miraculous healing and he first draws attention to the faith that prompts people to ask for his help. Today’s story from Matthew’s Gospel is no exception: *Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.* She asked for healing for her daughter, and she also received that word that affirms her faith in Jesus. He doesn’t even have to be physically present for his word to make someone whole.

One of my favourite hymns is “Sometimes a Healing Word is Comfort.”¹ *Sometimes a healing word is comfort: easing the grieved or anxious heart, giving assurance of our caring, treasuring each and every part... Sometimes a healing word will listen: hearing the voiceless into speech, letting the pattern of the story move us to learn what it can teach.* Sometimes a word of healing comes through a word of comfort, encouragement, reassurance or empathy. Sometimes it comes through silence. Sometimes it comes as a surprise. However it comes, and whatever it looks like, it is a gift of God, and if we see it in that light, our healing will be a more wholistic experience.

Healing. We all know what it feels like. Whether it is a head cold running its course, recovery from surgery, being cured of a disease or surviving grief, it is a universal human experience. And it is something that has an effect beyond the person in the most immediate need. It affects those who love that individual too. When we are caring for or supporting someone in need of healing, it is a terrible thing to feel helpless. We wonder what we can do to lessen the pain, to lift the burden. Maybe it’s getting medication for a person who is ill. Maybe it’s making a phone call to someone who is lonely. Maybe it is putting a band aid on a child’s skinned knee. I remember going through boxes of them when I was a day camp counsellor because it seemed that even when an elbow or knee wasn’t actually bleeding, a band aid would make it all better. I think it also was the fact that we took a moment to pay attention that helped. A soothing voice and a Disney character band aid made all the difference.

Healing can happen pretty quickly, or it can take a while. A couple of weeks ago Logan came home with a finger the size of a ballpark frank. He’d jammed it on a basketball hoop. We thought he might have broken it, or not. He may have dislocated it, or not. It’s hard to tell. So I looked up what to do for a jammed finger and when to seek medical attention, according to the Mayo Clinic, and we decided he likely hadn’t broken it and possibly had a slight dislocation. So we iced it, put a splint on it and told him to stop shooting hoops for a couple of days. Good luck with that. That was more than two weeks ago. It still doesn’t fully bend, and it still aches from time to time, but the swelling is gone and he’s shooting hoops just fine. It would probably heal more quickly if he’d rest it, but as I said, good luck with that. In the greater scheme of life, it’s a minor injury and it will eventually be back to what it was before. It won’t take that long. And there is a good chance he’ll do it again. At least now we know what to do.

It’s when we don’t know what to do that healing seems so far away.
It’s when we experience recurring pain or injury that healing seems almost unreachable.
It’s when the pain is too much to bear that despair can set in and we lose hope.

¹ Found at #768 in the Book of Praise (Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997). Words: © Pat Michaels, 1992; Music: Public Domain.

Physical pain and injury is one thing. Emotional and spiritual pain and injury is another. And unfortunately, they tend to go together – one giving rise to the other. We know that mental stress can present as physical pain. Physical pain causes stress. Spiritual suffering complicates everything. Sometimes the healing we seek doesn't come in the form we hope for. Sometimes it comes for a physical pain but the emotional scars linger. Sometimes physical healing does not come, but spiritual healing gives us the strength to cope. Regardless, pain makes us long for healing, no matter the cause of the trouble.

Patsy Clairmont is one of Zondervan Publishers' more popular authors. She writes about real life, with real experiences and real troubles. She also writes about hope and healing in the midst of it all, and with a tremendous sense of humour and wit. She wrote her book, Mending Your Heart in a Broken World in 2001.² Clairmont, who once suffered from severe agoraphobia, knows what it means to hurt, and what it means to heal. In the introductory chapter she writes about how often she and her husband have moved. She says the only people to have moved as much as they have are the Israelites in the book of Exodus. She reflects on the reality that something gets broken every time they move, recounting the story of a move they did themselves. "Once, in a family effort to move our items into a home, we formed a bucket brigade between the truck and the new house to pass along our belongings. In the handoff a world globe was being tossed from one set of youthful hands to another, when it tumbled to the ground, jolted down the driveway, and crashed into the mailbox post. The orb split in two, right along the equator.

" 'You've broken my world,' I whimpered.

"The helpers rolled their eyes at my acute case of melodrama."³

Clairmont then goes on to write about how her husband repaired the globe but it was never quite the same. The hemispheres didn't match up. She writes, "Perhaps your world has been broken in a similar fashion. Perhaps a job loss, a divorce, a serious illness, or a death has split your heart in two... Can one exist in a fractured world with any sense of a fixed reference? If our hearts and dreams have been broken or scarred by life's journey, how might we recover?... How can we experience comfort in the midst of heartbreak?" She ends the story by stating she has asked herself these questions.⁴

We've all asked ourselves those questions, or similar ones.

How can I get through this in one piece? WILL I get through this in one piece? Where can I go for help? What can take away the pain? Will I ever recover?

In the story of Joseph finally revealing his true identity to his brothers in today's reading from Genesis, a remarkable healing takes place. Joseph, years earlier, was so resented by his older brothers that they sold him into slavery and told their father, Jacob, he was dead. So much pain and grief for both Joseph and Jacob, and for younger brother Benjamin to whom Joseph had been as close as brothers can be. But Joseph, by God's grace and will, rose above it all to become a great ruler in Egypt. He had forgiveness in his heart for he knew God had brought him through it all for a greater purpose. He may have been heartbroken over his brothers' hatred toward him, frightened by all that happened to him, but as God's plan played out, he knew he had a vital role to play. And by the time we get to this part of his story, he is able to forgive his brothers, and restore what had been irreparably broken between them. He is able to mend the hearts of his father and younger brother, and not only that, he

² Clairmont, Patsy. *Mending Your Heart in a Broken World*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI, 2001.

³ *Ibid.*, Pg. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Pg. 3

also promises to look after his family in the famine that is hitting the region. There is serious grace in this story, and unexpected healing. Relationships between people are restored, hearts are mended in a very broken situation, and the future looks a whole lot better than it once did.

As good as that all sounds, it is likely the healing didn't happen at the snap of Joseph's fingers. And, even with his forgiveness toward his brothers, what did his father think when he had taken the whole thing in? How could his sons have done this to one of their own? Jacob was a deeply faithful man of God, but human nature is what it is. How would you feel in that situation? Sometimes when one healing is given, other complications can arise. The medication works to alleviate the pain, but there are side effects. It seems that nothing is as easy as we hope it will be.

Then again, sometimes the healing goes deeper than we had could have expected.

In the Gospel reading today, a woman is trying to get Jesus' attention, and he appears to be ignoring her. But she is persistent. His disciples try to get him to tell her to go away, to get rid of her, because she is pestering them. She is annoying them. She doesn't give up. She gets through and kneels at Jesus' feet, asking for healing for her daughter. She obviously knows Jesus can help her. When she expresses her understanding of Jesus' response to her, he speaks a word and her daughter is healed. She is healed because her mother believed healing was available through Jesus. In the woman's deepest longing, Jesus sees her trust in him and restores her daughter to wholeness. Her faith in Jesus' miraculous power brought miraculous healing for the girl, and also for the mother. Her heart would have been broken for her daughter. She would have been afraid and even shamed because of the disease that was taking her daughter from her. She clung to the hope that Jesus could help and her own heart was mended as the healing happened for one she loved. She wasn't asking for healing for herself, but in the process of her request being granted, she received it too.

In asking Jesus for help, with confident faith that he will help, that is the beginning of healing. Knowing that there is someone we can turn to with any request, any pain, any need for comfort begins the healing process. In other words, when we pray, we begin to heal. Whether we feel it right away or not, prayer is the first step. It helps us, and it helps those for whom we pray. Prayer is the first step in knowing God's work of healing.

A friend and colleague has been writing a daily Word of Comfort throughout the pandemic. One day last week, he concluded his thoughts with words I found to be rather powerful, and I'd like to conclude my meditation today with those same words...

"We need to remember people in prayer, whether they are strangers or friends. We need to remember the power of prayer to help and to heal. We should pray for help for ourselves so that we can be ready to help others when the situation arises. God can do the impossible, even in our impossible lives."⁵

Thanks be to God. Amen.

⁵ From "Words of Comfort" written by the Rev. David Berkens for August 7, 2020.