

All Saints Episcopal Church

12 Leidenstraat

Willemstad

Curacao

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

(B)

February 4, 2024

A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Parrish

“We Are Healed to Serve”

DRAFT

The Holy Gospel according to

Mark 1:29-39

Jesus left the synagogue at Capernaum and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with

various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the

message in their synagogues and casting
out demons.

Precious Lord, take my hand

Lead me on, let me stand

I am tired, I am weak, I am worn

Through the storm, through the night

Lead me on to the light

Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me
home.

--Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932

Let us pray.

O God, your loving hand has made us in your own image, given us all we possess, and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: reach out your hand again and heal us, that we may respond in kind, offering your hope and healing to all who are broken in body or spirit, that together we may be your whole and healed and holy Body on this earth. This we pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

That beautiful and meaningful prayer was composed by our former Presiding

Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori.

Danish theologian Soren Kirkegaard wrote once that Jesus came to find followers but he got mostly admirers. When something wonderful happens, many will ‘wonder’ about it, but few will change the way they live and become followers of the one who was responsible for all healing, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, as the first Chapter of the Gospel of John declares. The one

who was responsible for the creation of our world came in person in the late first century BC as the savior and redeemer of the world; so no wonder he could work wonders: he created the earth, the heavens and all that is in them. So when Jesus healed the sick and insane, he was only setting right the damage the adversary had done in his absence; and Christ's influence continues today in the miracles of healing we experience and hear of daily. The blind can see, the deaf can hear, and the dying live again.

My personal example is my own brother who came into the hospital three months ago gasping for breath: his lungs had simply given out; the malady is called Ideopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. He was at the verge of death. This week, with the help of very skilled surgeons and medical team he walked out of the hospital with two healthy lungs, ready to live out the rest of his life. It was one of the modern medical miracles we have become almost to expect, regardless of the disease or illness, and nowadays we often are very disappointed when a

friend finally succumbs to a dread disease which maybe in a few years will probably be curable. Time is on the side of healing. But Christ is on the side of time; his time is God's time, and healing is always in his hands and in the hands of those who believe he can heal anything.

I read several sermons on the healings of Christ and have extracted a few of them as follows:

Medical research is suggesting that there is a clear connection between stress and illness. In a famous book, "Getting

Well Again”, by Symington and Symington, who are cancer research specialists, these research physicians discuss stress as a contributing cause of most disease, including cancer. High levels of stress cause a susceptibility to disease, especially chronic stress, and stress over a long period of time contributes to the repression of the immune system.

In this book, there is research study by a physician from the University of Washington. His name is Dr. Vernon Riley. Dr. Riley divides cancer prone

groups of mice into two groups. He puts one group of cancer prone mice under high stress and another group of cancer prone mice under low stress. In the high stress group, 92% of them developed cancer; in the low, stress free group, it was 7%; 92% verses 7%. Stress had resulted in the suppression of the immunity system in those mice.

Another interesting research study is that people often get cancer sixteen months after some enormously emotionally traumatic event in their lives. When we hear a conclusion that

people are susceptible to cancer sixteen months after an unusually traumatic event or events, a person has to express an enormous reservation. Trauma does not necessarily cause cancer, but it may be another example of stress contributing to all diseases, including cancer.

We are well aware of psychosomatic medicine and we are well aware that if we have a disease, it is often the result of a dis-ease. We have dis-eases in our stomachs. That is, I have a dis-easiness due to a conflict with my family or work. There is a dis-easiness which grows and

grows and grows in me. I have a dis-easiness in me and so I go and work compulsively and have a heart attack, or I have a dis-easiness within me so I drink compulsively to calm the dis-easiness in me and soon may become an alcoholic. I eat too much ice cream and other foods to control the dis-easiness in my nerves. We all know about this. We all know about this dis-easiness inside of us that results in much of our compulsive behavior, trying to calm our stomachs down.

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_b_hunger_for_healing.htm

One time, I had an adult inquiry class list the stressors in their lives. We put down fifty on the board. What were the top two stressors in their lives? Way at the top? What was number one? You all know the answer: Money. The shortage of money was by far the number one stressor. I then asked the class how many of them did not have enough money to eat, sleep and take care of their essential needs. One out of thirty did not

have enough money. Twenty-nine did, but even if they had enough money, they put stress on themselves about money.

What was the second highest stressor?

Conflicts with people at work. Conflicts at work can eat at us when we are at home and everywhere else.

At the heart of all healing is first a willingness to be honest, a willingness to be honest about one's dis-easiness. A willingness to be honest about those things which you don't want to be honest about. When some of us were growing up, we sang this song by Elvis Presley,

“The Great Pretender”. For many of us, the art of life is pretending. The great pretenders, pretending we are well when we are not.

Second, we need Jesus to heal and help us to change the conflicts and stressors that contribute to 85% of the illnesses today. At the very heart of healing is an honesty about those things in our life which are not well, and the loving Presence of God and Christ in our lives can heal those inner tensions, conflicts and stressors.

Third, we are to use the finest doctors, hospitals, research, drugs and technology which are available today and through which God continues to work modern miracles. “The Journal of the American Medical Association (January 2002) reports that during any given week, more than 80% of all Americans take at least one type of medication—either prescription drugs, over-the-counter treatments, or herbal supplements. A phone survey discovered that 50% of those polled said they take prescription drugs at least once a week, and 16%

regularly use one or more herbal supplements.”

<http://www.lectionaid.com/18-1/1QJ.html>

As we use all this medical technology and medicines, there is still plenty of room for belief, the power of medicinal belief, to believe that we can be healed through these modern medicines. The key is the word, belief. I remember watching a video and all these children had leukemia and all the children had the finest medical treatments in the world.

But in addition to that medical treatment, these physicians had these children imaging in their mind how the cancer was being attacked. One little boy was into Star Wars, and this little boy with leukemia would come flying down in a Star Wars jet airplane fighter and he would shoot at and blast the tumors. The little girl wasn't that way at all. The little girl had a river and it was a river of white blood cells, and those white blood cells washed around the tumor at every side of it. That river of cells was washing that tumor away.

Fourth, at the heart of healing today is to pray. It is to pray deeply for your own wellness, and to pray deeply for the wellness of those around you. While in the midst of a long hospital illness, living in the middle of medical miracles, how we should pray: deeply, persistently, for God's strength, for God's healing, for God's Presence.

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_b_hunger_for_healing.htm

Once upon a time there were some doctors who were discussing whether

prayer helped their patients. Does it do any good, they asked, for people to pray for those who are sick. One group said it helps those who pray to feel that they're doing something for the sick person. But it really doesn't help the sick person at all. The other group said that they had the impression that prayer really had a positive effect on sick people. The first group said that's scientifically impossible. So they decided to try a "double blind" experiment on those who were recover from heart problems. They would have prayers said for some and

not for the others to see what happened.

The doctors didn't know who was chosen to be prayed for and the subjects of the prayers didn't know either.

However, a list of first names were given to those who were to do the praying. So, neither the prayers or the prayees or the researchers know had been chosen to be the target of prayer. What happened?

Those for whom prayers were said recovered more quickly. See, said those who had argued that prayer worked, there's more things under heaven than science dreams of. (This is a true story

about research which is reported in the Archives of Internal Medicine, October 25/1999.)

<http://www.agreeley.com/hom09/feb08.htm>

God is all powerful and has the world in God's hands, through his Son Jesus our Lord. When we come to him for healing and wholeness, he will not turn us away.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

February 4, 2024

“We Are Healed to Serve”

Mark 1:29-39

5 Epiphany (B)

Description:

Jesus came into the world to heal and save us. When we pray, we should pray believing God will indeed help us. We do not have all the cures yet, and may never have, but God is merciful and hears our prayers and always comes to heal us spiritually even when physical healing may not happen. We are to pray

for ourselves and for and with others in times of dis-ease. More and more miracles continuously happen by the grace of God.

Tags: Healing, Jesus, mother-in-law, medicine, disease, prayer, doctors, wholeness, stress, research, Bishop, followers, admirers