

Matthew 15:29-31 – After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain where he sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Matthew 17:14-21 – When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, and said, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him.” Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”

Healing ~ Jesus Style

(This was shared in “storytelling” fashion. Therefore this narrative will not match exactly what was shared on Sunday in worship.)

Isn't it amazing that Jesus' healing power is so available to us. Whether that power is used for spiritual strength or growth, physical healing or freedom from pain, peace of mind, calming of emotions, or the mending of relationships, we find **in** our faith in Christ that which equips us for living into Christ's reign, even on earth.

I would like to introduce you to my memory of John Hopson. John & Polly Hopson attended worship faithfully, including the healing services held two or three Sundays each year. On one of those Sundays, after reading the text from Luke 8 where the woman who touches the hem of Jesus robe is healed, we gave out fabric (just like you received this morning!). For there are many of us who reach toward Jesus' healing power. John's strong faith professed that God could heal all our infirmities.

About this time 14 yrs. ago, John stopped on a Tuesday. That was not unusual, as John needed to pick up the keys for the church van, which he would drive to transport folks to/from Soup & Sandwich Supper. But this week he stopped to talk with me about what he had done with the fabric which he received at the healing service. He had placed it under his pillow so that he could rub it during his bed-time prayers.

A couple of weeks later I received a call stating that John was hospitalized due to severe rectal bleeding, and he would like me to bring him another piece of fabric. Next,

John endured many tests, but he never feared the worst. He asked for prayers for healing, trusting that God would care for him. He received a diagnosis of Colon Cancer, and surgery followed. He had a difficult recovery. When I went to see him in the ICU, his arm was severely swollen and strapped to board. Between his fingers and the board, there was his piece of fabric. And although he looked as though he was not conscious, his fingers were rubbing the fabric, and his lips were praying. John's connection with God was strong. And John was constantly reminding us that he could feel the prayerful support and love of his church family. Through each step of John's ordeal, the community offered prayers: celebrating each little bit of good news, seeking strength for John to face each new challenge, and placing trust in God's healing power and love.

Each time John was hospitalized, it was important to him to have a piece of fuzzy fleece fabric as a reminder of his direct connection with Christ's power to heal.

In the midst of his recovery from surgery and chemotherapy treatments John took a downward slide. The doctor told his gathered family that he had never seen these treatments have such a disastrous effect as they had with John. Nothing could be done to reverse that.

While the news caused anguish and fear for those who knew they would soon be losing John, I know that John looked forward to achieving the ultimate healing - the wholeness that only God could offer to him. John's faith made his spirit strong, and was his ticket to eternal bliss. He knew he was about to achieve a healing which may not have been exactly what **we** had prayed for, but was welcome and joyous none-the-less.

Sometimes, however, I wonder if it is remotely possible that many folks who are experiencing brokenness, really do not want to be healed. They have been broken for so long, that perhaps they have doubt or fears about being healed. They have become comfortable with self-pity and sympathy from others, and the state of brokenness has become what is familiar in their lives. If they are healed, what will life be like? Will they know how to function? Will they have newfound responsibilities? For some, it is easier to live in a broken state than to risk healing. This is especially true when it comes to broken relationships.

Healing is not the same thing as being cured. We may be healed of our affliction, but the *fear* of the disease's long-lasting effects or possible return can remain with us, and even paralyze our spirits. A broken relationship may be healed, yet we *fear* the hurt that may someday return if we fully invest ourselves in that relationship again, and that fear denies us of future happiness.

True healing occurs when we let go of the affliction and its control over us.

So, healing is not just about curing an illness. Oft times our lives are broken, hurt, bruised. We have been torn apart by broken relationships and events that make us feel unworthy and of little value; we may feel guilty or ashamed. Brokenness exists on many levels of spiritual living.

Healing ~ Jesus Style

Matthew 15:29-31 & 17:14-21

Rev. Beckie Sweet

As John let go of his affliction, and was preparing to receive ultimate wholeness in his faith in Christ, he reminded us that for some, healing comes in physical, mental, or emotional ways during this life; and for others healing of the soul is our reward for eternal life. Consider Christ's power to heal your brokenness and Christ's willingness to turn with you on that journey toward wholeness and peace today. For Christ wants all of us to sing with the saints, "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus," for "It is well, it is well with my Soul." Amen.