

More Healing

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Date: 09 February 2020

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[0 : 00] Good morning. In our gospel reading this morning that we heard Kevin read, which is again in the book of Luke, we heard Jesus confronting the powers of darkness and confronting a broken world.

He cast out a demon. He miraculously healed people. And I think from the outset, we need to be aware of two possible errors to avoid. The first is to find it so strange that we just write it off. And it is strange. It's peculiar. We don't encounter miracles in the supernatural every day, if at all. And the knowledge that we've gained as an advanced society tells us that none of that is possible in the first place, that the supernatural world doesn't really exist.

And if you feel this way, I'd ask you not to dismiss what we've read or what we'll talk about for two reasons. The first is you and I agree, I think, that there's a lot of wisdom to be found in non-Western cultures, wisdom that our culture has forgotten.

And in many of these cultures, they are completely open to the idea that there are personal forces behind the veil. So while you and I might find it odd, we would do well to be listeners.

[1 : 30] The second reason I'd like you not to dismiss this is because what we're reading in the book of Luke is an eyewitness account to a person, to the life of the person of Jesus.

And so we need to start with him, who he was, and what he and who he claimed to be. If the spirit world does not exist, then Jesus is merely a motivator or an encourager, and these stories lack substance.

But Jesus claimed to be so much more than an encourager or a motivator. He claimed to be the very son of God. All right, that's the first error, just to write it off.

The second error, which might be more tragic, is to be too familiar with these stories. And when we're too familiar, we tend to just gloss through them, not pay attention.

This is like me, I think. I love the book of Luke. The book of Luke presents Jesus as having compassion and a heart for the outsider and for the outcast.

[2 : 38] And so we read all these amazing accounts of Jesus calling a tax collector of all people, Levi, of Jesus calling out and saving Zacchaeus.

We read about the Good Samaritan. And so with passages like this, I tend to go, okay, exorcisms, healings, let me get to the good stuff. And I fail to be amazed.

I fail to be amazed at who Jesus is and what he's done. So let's descend with Jesus to the city of Capernaum.

Let's encounter him and his power and his authority and his compassion. And let's discover what's available to us as we have a personal encounter with him.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Almighty God, we long to see you. Jesus, we long to see you in the synagogue.

[3 : 49] We long to see you along the shores of Galilee. We long to see you in Peter's house. We long to encounter your power.

We long to encounter your authority. We long to encounter your compassion.

So as we look at this passage together, Lord, let the healing streams abound, make and keep us pure within. Amen.

So you maybe remember last week, we were in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. And in Nazareth, he delivered a sermon from the scroll of Isaiah, which he identified as his mission statement.

To proclaim the good news for the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to bring sight to the blind, and freedom for those who are oppressed.

[4 : 56] And though they were impressed with his preaching, they soon turned against him when he told his fellow Nazarenes of God's grace, for the outsider, for Gentiles, for nations that Israel

detested.

They turned against him, marching him up a hill, attempting to throw him off a cliff. Jesus leaves unharmed. And in verse 31, we read that he went down to Capernaum.

Now this would have been about a 40-mile hike, winding through hill country, through valleys, alongside rock cliffs, lots of greens and browns, quite lovely.

From 1,200 feet above sea level, where Nazareth sits, down to 686 feet below sea level, to the Sea of Galilee, to this fishing village called Capernaum, which sits on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, about two miles from where the upper part of the Jordan River flows into the lake.

And he visits the synagogue there. And today you can visit the ruins of a second century synagogue, which probably was built over top, the same spot where the first synagogue sat. So you can visit probably the place where Jesus preached these words and confronted the powers of evil.

[6 : 18] Inside the synagogue, you would have found fishermen, merchants, craftsmen, laborers, and their wives, all participating in the psalms and blessings and prayers, the reading from the law and the prophets.

And you were eagerly awaiting the sermon from this carpenter who was causing such a stir among the towns around this inland sea.

Now, imagine yourself there, would you? Imagine yourself there and imagine you have some sort of ailment or illness, sickness that only you know about.

And it's nearly debilitating, but you're still able to keep it a secret. These fishermen and merchants and craftsmen have no idea about your illness.

They don't know about your constant pain because you don't reveal it to people. If you do, you would be considered unclean, would be considered an outcast.

[7 : 26] You would be cut off from the community. It's not hard to imagine that, is it? Many of us right now are hiding something about ourselves that we would rather not have revealed or else we would feel cut off.

We would be afraid of being cast off. So you're standing there alongside your fellow villagers waiting for this Nazarene to preach.

He does not disappoint. He said things in a way that you had never heard before. And everyone there, including yourself, are thunderstruck with amazement.

I mean, take yourself back into the present. Can you remember a time when you were dumbfounded? When you jumped out of your seat, perhaps because of an amazing sports play or a ripping solo or a crazy plot twist in your favorite television show.

I mean, do you remember how that felt? Like exhilarating, right? Now imagine being in a whole group of people experiencing that. You're feeling this right now in this crowd, in this synagogue, in this fishing village.

[8 : 46] And in the middle of all this, shrieks him in. Ah! And it doesn't sound entirely like a man. Ha!

What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. And all eyes turn to Jesus.

This feels like a showdown. Now you've heard of exorcisms happening before, you being a turn-of-the-millennium Galilean. But you, and most people you know, you've been skeptical because of the hocus-pocus that would surround such an event.

You heard about one exorcist in Palestine who would put a ring under the possessed person's nose. And then the exorcist would recite this really long spell. And then there would be a basin of water staged nearby.

And then there'd be a splash. Aha! That's the demon. We got him! But not this time. It doesn't happen this time. After the demon-possessed man challenges Jesus, there's silence and stillness in the synagogue by the sea.

[10 : 00] Except for the sound of the lapping water through the window of the synagogue, the sound of the Sea of Galilee lapping up against the shore, and maybe the cry of a seagull. And Jesus says, be muzzled.

That's what he literally says. Be muzzled. Come out of him. And with this word, with this simple rebuke, the man is thrown down, the demon is cast out, and the man is in his right mind.

The people around you respond, what is this word? For with authority and power, he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.

That's right. You sense it too. Authority and power. Authority, because the teachers of the law that you have always heard taught in the synagogue, they taught in a style that was mainly just quotes. They would just quote their teachers who were quoting their teachers, and it was just a sermon full of quotation marks. These teachers took a lot of pride in being able to rip off all these quotes.

[11:11] But man, was it boring. It was labyrinthine, and legalistic, and joyless, and weightless. It was all secondhand, and thirdhand.

It was a hand-me-down theology. But Jesus would say, you have heard it said, such and such, but I tell you, I tell you, it was fresh, and it was clear, like it made sense, and it was alive, and it would penetrate, and convict, and liberate, and heal.

You knew authority when you heard it. And along with authority, came power. Jesus' authority was challenged, and Jesus imposed his will.

Have you come to destroy us? The demon asked. Us, that is. The demon is saying, have you come to destroy both me, and this man? Because you're not winning without me taking this guy down.

I know who you are, the demon shouted. The Holy One of God. Now, you recognize being, again, a turn of the millennium, Galilean, that this is a power play. It was believed that if you could name something, or have the true name for something, or someone, then you had power over it, and you could control it.

[12:36] That's what the people of this time believed. In giving something or someone its true name, you could have control over it, but this was no contest. It wasn't even close.

It wasn't a riveting contest of mostly equals, like Skywalker versus the Emperor, or Potter versus Voldemort. It wasn't even 91 seconds of Tyson dominating Sphinx.

It was instant. And the man isn't even harmed at all. Everyone lives. So not only are you thinking that Jesus had authority and power, but you see he has compassion.

Jesus departs. You go home, and you can't stop thinking about his authority, his power, and his compassion. The Holy One of God, you remember the demon saying.

You remember how the world was spoken into existence by a Holy One with authority and power.

[13:51] And you realize somehow you were in the presence of the divine. That realization occurs just as you are acutely aware of your own pain, this illness that you've been feeling that you carried into that synagogue.

This wound, this yuck that you've been hiding out of fear. And you know what you need to do. You need to go see him. And you know where to find him.

You heard he went to Simon's house. Simon is a burly fisherman, a fellow Galilean from Bethsaida who currently lives in your town of Capernaum. It's the Sabbath.

So you wait until sundown because it's a bit too far to travel on the Sabbath, the day of rest. But you're so eager that you leave as the sun is setting hoping no one will see you.

Right? But then you get outside and of course everyone's thinking the same thing. Maybe they won't see me. I'll just get a head start. It's like my friend who grew up in Iowa at a fundamentalist Baptist church.

[14:59] They were strictly not allowed to see movies. So they would go to the town 30 minutes away and in the theater half the people were from their church. So anyway, everyone is doing the same thing.

As the sun is setting, they're heading to Simon's house. They're going to see Jesus including a lot of people you haven't seen in a while. You're going there and you haven't seen some of these people because they've been sick for a long time.

You arrive at Simon's house with this throng of people many who are sick and through a window you see Simon's mother-in-law and you knew she was sick with a raging fever and you had wondered knowing the average lifespan at this time is around 40 years that this might be it for her. But there she was up and about serving with energy and joy. So you're feeling hopeful. I think she may have been healed. Jesus opens the door but then you start to doubt because some of these people are like religiously ceremonially unclean.

So I doubt this holy one is going to come into our midst but he does. He does. He doesn't stand from a distance and say a healing for you and a healing for you and you get a healing.

[16:27] He comes into the midst of these people very slowly. He places his hands on somebody and then he places his hands on somebody else and then on somebody else and people are being healed.

He's not afraid to touch us. You've never seen compassion like this. And finally it's your turn. Finally it's your turn.

What's the look on his face? Do you see the kindness in his eyes? Does he place his hands on your head or does he place them on your heart?

or does he wrap you with an embrace and not let go? Where do you need healing?

Where do you need healing right now? What kind of griefs need to be healed? What kind of addiction do you need to be freed from? What broken relationship do you find needs to be restored?

[17 : 44] What betrayal have you been walking around unable to shake? What fear do you need deliverance from? What pits of anxiety or depression or mental illness do you need to be lifted out of?

What shame or disgrace do you need to be rid of? What kind of physical illness do you need relief from?

Brothers and sisters Jesus had the authority and power and compassion to heal you. He has the authority and the power and the compassion to heal you.

His uncontested authority and unlimited power and unfathomable compassion means there is more healing available to you.

There is more healing available to you. Do you hear this? There is more healing available to you. And it's an encounter with the person of Jesus.

[18 : 57] His hands. His embrace. His countenance. His heart. That can bring the healing. You and I probably think of salvation as merely a spiritual event.

Perhaps we need to think of it more expansively. After God created the world good and perfect and man sinned everything broke. Our relationship to God because of sin our relationship with ourselves our psyche our environment broke including our bodies.

So which of all that did Jesus come to fix? Jesus came to earth he died on the cross and he rose again so that you and I could have access to the Father. That is of utmost importance.

We have access to the Father we have forgiveness of sins and we can be healed. Soul and body together that is rescue.

We are rescued soul and body together the good news of that Jesus proclaimed was forgiveness he proclaimed freedom he proclaimed healing Jesus' healings weren't in ends to a means they were in ends themselves.

[20 : 13] He had compassion for the sick and he comes in person as a person to heal and because of his power and authority and compassion there is more healing available to you.

Let's think of this even more expansively we read in the last chapter of Revelation chapter 22 that there is healing for the nations available as Jesus makes all things new healing for the nation I mean that's a cosmic concept there's healing available between warring countries there's healing available between races there's forgiveness available reconciliation repentance justice that are available there's healing available even between Democrats and Republicans do you believe it? do you believe that? because the world needs you to believe it and the world needs you to be praying for it or do you bore the angels with your prayers? or do you pray for the impossible? what feels impossible? do you pray for healing on a cosmic scale? how about you shock the angels may it sound scandalous the way you pray with boldness that God would bring healing to this nation we read of healing being available when people encounter the person of Jesus so how do we encounter the person of Jesus?

well I think it's instructive at the end of this account in verse 42 we read and when it was day Jesus departed and went into a desolate place and the people sought him and came to him and he would have kept him from leaving them but he said to them I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well for I was sent for this purpose you might remember last week that people thronged Jesus and kicked him out of town and tried to throw him off a cliff this is the opposite people like mob him and try to keep him in town they try to make him stay not only is that instructive I think that's prescriptive we encounter Jesus and we keep him from leaving when we have what you could call a rule of life it's a rhythm of praying and reading and resting that keeps Jesus' authority and compassion forefront in our minds and in our spirits through the rhythms of our day healing is available when we encounter Jesus when we gather together at this table we believe Jesus is really present here when we come forward and share this meal and he heals and he restores our soul healing is available when we confess our sins to one another in James 5 we read

is anyone among you sick let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up and if he has committed sins he will be forgiven therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed you know we have a liturgy for that too we have a liturgy of prayers of repentance and reconciliation that you can do with a priest a confession healing is available supernaturally we believe that Jesus still heals supernaturally and miraculously tonight at our sister church

[24 : 05] Falls Church Anglican at 7 o'clock you can go to a healing service and anyone is welcome to attend there will be people to pray to pray for you there will be songs there will be prayers and healing is finally also available through men and women made in the image of God fulfilling God's mandate to subdue the earth through the vocations of medicine and science counseling healing we can find healing for depression anxiety and mental illness so what about you what ailment did you carry into the synagogue what ailment were you concealing from your fellow villagers what ailment did you carry as you walked along the shores of the sea of Galilee to Simon's house what pain will you be bringing today as you walk down these aisles as you extend your hands in need to be fed at Jesus' table brothers and sisters there is more healing available there is more healing available he has made all things so he has the power to heal he governs all things so he has the authority to heal and he has compassion on all he has made especially his daughter especially his son so he has the desire to heal in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit amen father let the healing streams abound let the healing streams abound as we encounter you lord as we encounter you among your people as we see you extend your grace to us through embrace through touch through the peace of the lord lord let the healing streams abound as we partake of this meal let the healing streams abound as we sing and rejoice give you praise and thanks for rescuing us body and soul let the healing streams abound as we go to this place into our workplace as we rely on your holy spirit to be reminding us constantly every hour of every day that we are your daughters and sons in Jesus name we pray amen