

They Malpractice of the Great Physician

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Preacher: Tad Inboden

[0 : 00] Would you please join me in prayer? Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you so much for the gift of your Son, for his death and resurrection, for his ascension.

Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you are a God who heals. And Lord, we pray right now that you would open our hearts, just receive your healing, your precious name, amen.

Okay. Good evening, everyone. How are you all doing? Good, good. I'm doing well, too. A little bit tired. New baby, but it's good.

It's good. We're surviving. We're surviving. So for those of you who don't know who I am, my name's Tad N. Bowden, and I'm the director of student ministries here at St. John's.

I work with Nick Portingen and Lynn Unger. Great team. Love them. And a whole bunch of other youth leaders who are amazing. And if you are new or you're a student or a young adult, I would love to get to know you.

[1 : 03] So come talk to me after service and we'll chat. Cool? Great. So this evening, I want to dive right in. And here's what we're going to talk about this evening.

We're going to talk about healing. Or I would like to talk to you about healing. Because this passage is about healing. It's about Jesus healing. And more specifically, what I want to talk to you about is how do we trust God with healing in our life?

How do we trust God with healing in our life? And as a way to introduce this, I'm going to tell a personal story and then we're going to dive in. So many of you know my wife, Nicole.

We worked together for a time, but she had a baby, our baby Audrey, and she's on mat leave right now. But last year, many of you know that Nicole's brother passed away, her older brother.

And I'm going to tell you a little bit about that story from my vantage point as we talk about this idea of faith and healing in God. So the story goes that Cabot, Nicole's older brother, had seizures.

[2 : 20] And he had this severe seizure. And then he went into a coma and would not wake up. So he's in the hospital. And Nicole flies over to Colorado where he is to be with him and her sister.

And so she's calling me. I'm still in Vancouver. And she's calling me to update me on what's going on. You know, with Cabot's status. And basically, the updates were never really good.

It was basically, he's in pretty bad shape and he's going to need a miracle. So, like everyone else who loves Cabot and loves my wife's family, we prayed for Cabot.

I prayed for Cabot. I prayed for God to heal Cabot. And I even went so far in prepping to go see Cabot to read stories in the Gospels where Jesus specifically deals with people with seizures.

You know those stories? And they're demon-possessed. And he delivers them and heals them. And when he raises someone from the dead. When someone is as good as dead and Jesus raises them. And I've heard stories about this.

[3 : 28] So I was praying, right? Okay. God, you did it then. You do it now. Can you please do it? And so, I go over, get on a plane to fly over to Colorado.

And while I'm on the plane, I sense, not that it was, you know, God just wanted me to pray in Vancouver. But God actually wanted me to lay hands on Cabot while he was, you know, laying in the hospital in this coma.

And I thought, oh, I mean, I really thought I heard from God, you know? Do it. And I thought because God was telling me to do it, he's definitely going to be healed, right?

I mean, I just thought that. Maybe that's terrible theology. So we arrived there. Or I arrived there. And here's what happens. I go and see Cabot and my heart's pounding. I mean, it's just, it was a hard sight. And I look at him and I just sense the Spirit, you know, pray for him.

[4 : 30] And all these things ran through my mind, right? You're embarrassed. You don't want to do it. Like, you're doubtful. You're like, if I pray, but, you know, what if I say something and he doesn't

get healed? What do I expect and all this stuff?

I was nervous. But I eventually did. And I prayed for Cabot, laid hands on him. And then, fully expecting for him to wake up or wake up in the future, what happened?

Cabot didn't wake up. Cabot would not wake up from that coma. And eventually, Cabot died a couple months later.

And we are still grieving his death. I was back there just thinking about it. And I did cry over it. It was just a very hard thing. Now, here's the thing.

I'm sure many of you can relate to that situation. Maybe not in that one specifically. But you can relate to someone in your life, someone you love passing away and dying.

[5 : 33] I'm sure you know someone, or maybe you've experienced this, of intense kind of chronic suffering. Or terrible diseases, life-threatening diseases.

You're experiencing these things. You know people. And you've prayed to God over and over and over again. You've had faith. And you say, God, you can do it. Can you do it? And you keep praying and you keep praying.

And the conditions get worse and worse and worse. Or you're suffering. You're suffering. You're suffering. And nothing's changing. And here's what happens. When God doesn't move.

When God doesn't heal. Here's what we think. What is going on? What is going on? I thought you're good, God.

I thought you're powerful. I'm confused what is happening right now. Why won't you heal this person? Why didn't you intervene? And when that happens, when God doesn't heal someone.

[6 : 30] When you thought he would, but he doesn't. Here's what happens. One of two things happen. You can blame yourself. Or you can blame God. Blame yourself or you blame God.

Here's what I mean. You blame yourself. You say, I must have done something wrong. To not cause God to bring healing either in my life or someone else's life.

Maybe I didn't have enough faith. Maybe it's because I was, you know, sinning or something. And God didn't want to work through me. And didn't want to answer my prayer or something.

Or maybe it's because I didn't have enough theological belief, correct doctrine, for God to actually work properly. I mean, there's a whole bunch of things.

But basically we blame ourselves. Or we blame God and we get angry at him. We say, God, I thought you said you're all powerful.

[7 : 30] I thought you said you loved us. I thought you said you're good. What gives here? I don't understand. How come that we hear stories of you healing this person?

But in this situation, someone who really needs it, who's really suffering, you're not moving, you're not acting, you're not healing. What gives? And we're plagued with anger towards God.

Why didn't he do more? I don't know if you've ever been there. Maybe you haven't experienced this type of thing. But probably you will.

Well, I don't know. Let me tell you something. I have been, what I'm talking about, blaming yourself and blaming God.

I've been there. I get it. I really do. And I know when we read stories like this, where Jesus does these miraculous healings. I mean, crazy things. Raises a girl from the dead.

[8 : 34] Deals with this woman who's hemorrhaging. Heals her. He cures someone of blindness. Two people of blindness. And he delivers someone from intense psychological and spiritual bondage.

Casts out a demon. We look at those things and a whole bunch of questions pop up in our minds. A whole bunch of doubts. And some of them are deeply personal.

And some are deeply theological. And as we engage this, I want to be sensitive to both. I want to be sensitive and respectful of both. So here's the things that I would like to unpack.

These two questions. I think when we read these passages or passages, healing accounts like this in the Gospels, these kind of questions pop up. So what role does faith actually play in the whole healing process?

What role does it play? Faith. The second question has to deal with the kind of healing that we can normally expect from God.

[9 : 43] So one has to deal with the R side of things, the blaming side. Oh, I'm mad at myself. The second side has to deal with the God thing. So it's just bringing clarification to faith with God in the healing process.

Does that make sense? So the first one, let's just dive into this. The first one. What role does faith play in this, in the healing process, in asking God for healing?

So there are a lot, a lot of popular ideas that float around. And they're just in our head. There's some, you know, churches who believe this.

But they're pretty, I mean, prevalent. And it's this. It's that our faith causes healing. And it's the focus is on you and your ability to muster up enough faith in order to receive healing from God.

So the popular idea says this, is that the more faith that you have, the more sincere and passionate and bold your faith is, the greater chances you're going to have of God healing you.

[10:54] If your faith is small, your blessings are going to be small. But if your faith is big, ooh, baby, your blessings are going to be big. So if you prayed for healing and it didn't happen, that means that something has gone wrong with your faith.

Your faith wasn't big enough. You didn't have enough of it. So faith here is this. On this view of things, here's what faith is. Faith is this psychological feeling that I have about God.

It is this intense kind of attitude of surrender and a state of certainty or confidence that I have to have all the time in order for God to bless me or heal me or interact with me, whatever it is.

So you would say, but tag. This is in the Bible. Look at our passage for today. Doesn't Jesus say to the hemorrhaging woman in verse 22?

What does he say? Your faith has made you well. And he also says it to the two blind men. In verse 29, he says, According to your faith, may it be done to you.

[12:17] And doesn't Jesus, we looked at a couple weeks ago, doesn't Jesus rebuke his disciples for having little faith? Faith. And 8.26. So clearly someone would say, Faith, it is faith that causes or brings about healing.

Okay. If you think that, I can understand how you think that. My wife and I were talking, I think this is, I mean, we waver in and out of believing this kind of thing.

I don't believe that's what's going on. And I don't think it is the biblical idea of faith.

In virtually every instance of healing in the Gospels, people simply come to Jesus. They simply come to him with open hands, and he heals them.

And sometimes faith is mentioned in those encounters with Jesus and his interventions, but sometimes they're actually not. Faith is not mentioned.

[13:25] And so, let me give you some examples. In our own text, in the case of the ruler, you know that the word is not mentioned with him. It's actually the word worship in verse 18.

He bows down and worships Jesus. The dead girl, for example, who actually received the miracle. You know, she was raised. She has no faith.

She's dead. The same thing happens with the demon-possessed guy. Faith, you realize, in that passage, is not mentioned once.

The only thing is that his friends brought him to Jesus. Jesus. So how could anyone, honestly, how could you argue biblically, even from these short little passages, that faith, our faith, actually causes healing?

It brings it about. How can you say that God didn't heal because he had so little faith? I don't think he can. I don't think it's biblical. And that's because this.

[14:28] It's because saving faith is about the object of your belief. It's Jesus Christ and his finished work. I think St. John's, we know that.

Right? It's the object of our belief. And not the belief itself that is crucial. So let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. Okay, you see, I may have very great faith, unshakable faith, in my ability to fly from Vancouver to England using feathers, tying up feathers and flying to, I may have unshakable faith in that.

Right? But here's the thing. I will not get to Vancouver by flying with wings like that.

I've put my faith in the wrong place. So equally though, here, I may have barely enough faith to board a transatlantic flight to Vancouver to England.

I could be tremendous, you know, nervous and trembling the whole way as I'm in the air. And yet the object of my faith, the plane, it will accomplish what it promises to do.

[15:46] You see this. This is important. It is not faith that saves or heals or anything like that. It is faith in Jesus Christ.

So what is faith? Let me give you a definition so we're clear on this. Faith, according to the Bible, is simply a wholehearted trust in Jesus Christ.

It is merely an attitude of coming to Jesus with empty hands. empty hands. That's it. Now, it is true, it is very, very true, that the gift of salvation, as well as, you know, gifts of healing and stuff like that, can only come to us through faith.

But faith here is only and ever an instrument by which we receive God's gift of salvation and healing. and never, ever, ever the cause of it.

It's never the cause. So let me give you another example. When a child, when a child, he comes to his mother for something he needs.

[17:00] He's trusting, he doesn't even consciously think about it, he just comes to his mother. He's trusting that she will give it to him. And his asking, you see, does not merit anything.

It is merely the way that he receives his mother's generosity. So this is crucial, it's really crucial with these things, with this faith and the idea of healing and how they interact.

Because here, if you think that faith is the cause of your salvation or even your healing, you will stop looking to Christ and start looking to your faith.

and when you have doubts, it will rattle you. When you don't feel quite as clearly or certain in Jesus, it's going to cause you to worry a great deal.

But the Bible says the gift of salvation and healing is always given to us freely, which means that's without cause. In a way that is totally and wholly unwarranted, given or done for no reason.

[18:05] So here's the idea. We come to Jesus with empty hands and say this. We say, I trust you completely. And we leave the results of healing to God.

This is the role faith plays. It is simply coming to Jesus, making your needs known to Him and receiving from Him. Your faith is never a work that you can look to and use it to manipulate God or make calculations or whatever it is.

It is never something that you should look at and constantly say, do I have enough faith today in order for God to heal me? No, no, no. You always look to Jesus in these things.

That makes sense? So what about healing then? What about healing? What kind of healing should we expect from God? If faith plays a role in this, it's the instrument through which we receive that and that's all it is and we come to God and we ask Him for these things, what kind of healing can we expect?

I think two kinds of healings. One, I think there is good biblical evidence, not only in this text but throughout the entire Gospels and the book of Acts, that we should expect from God supernatural interventions that are miraculous.

[19:28] we can expect from God to heal someone who is as good as dead. We can pray for those things. God can do those things. We see it in the book of Acts and God loves doing those things especially when His Son is glorified and His kingdom is more manifest.

He still heals people today. I think of John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement, just one recent example of this. This is real stuff.

God really does move. God really does miraculously heal people. So there is nothing wrong or unbiblical to pray for a miracle.

There is nothing wrong or unbiblical to pray for these things. But here is the thing I also want to say. I believe that we need to expand our understanding of how healing works in God's kingdom.

the normal way in which God heals us and wants to bring healing to our life. So God can do those supernatural crazy things.

[20:39] But here is, I think, the normal process of how God heals us and what we can expect and when we come to Him in trust and faith. Here it is. we often think of only physical suffering in these things, right?

The guy with the chronic disease or this terrible life-threatening situation, we think, you know, that's what healing is. We need God to heal them and deliver them. But there, we live in a fallen world, a sinful, broken world.

We have been hurt by people and we have hurt people. All in all, we are seriously broken and in need of healing. And our brokenness is, in a sense, it's total.

We need psychological healing. We need emotional healing. We need relational healing. We need especially spiritual healing.

healing. And God is in the business of bringing healing to all those areas of life. And this is why I believe that the most, most of God's healing He does in our life is this slow, gradual process to redeem and renew and restore all of us, every part of us as human beings.

[22 : 03] See, but this is crazy. God can somehow bring healing to our lives through great suffering. He can bring it hope through death. He works more often than not gradually from the inside out.

But we often look at God and say, work on the outside in. And He seeks to do deep work of healing in our hearts. I'm going to give you a story and we're going to close with this.

So, for me, I have spent most of my life, most of my Christian life, wanting those big things from God. Those supernatural interventions where He does crazy things.

I still want those things. I would still love for God to heal people like that, for me to see that and to be able to experience that and work with Him doing those things and participate in that.

That would be so cool. people. But here's the thing. There came a time when I was interning at this church and I began to tell my story.

[23 : 09] And the pastor heard my story, just a little snippet of my story. And he said, there is no way that anyone can go through that and not be affected. I think you need to go to a counselor.

And I'm like, me? Nah, I'm good, dude. I just need God to heal people, man. It's going to be great. And over time, I ended up going to counseling.

Ooh. And in that time, God, I mean, you know, like, so much pain, so much brokenness, so much denial of the past, so much unforgiveness, so many things in my life that I had not dealt with, so much brokenness that needed healing.

And I didn't want to go there. I didn't want to go through that process. And when they started coming up in my life, all these memories, all these things, oh, the worst, the worst.

And it says, God's saying, if you want to grow, if you want to grow into the person I'm calling, you have to walk through this. You have to deal with this. And do you know what I prayed? God, work a miracle.

[24 : 21] Deliver me from this. Right? Wipe the slate clean. I am ready. I am ready to be made new. I wanted that quick fix, that quick intervention. But here, I'll tell you, I went to counseling, and God did not wipe my, wipe the slate clean.

And it has been a long process of dealing with this stuff. And now, looking back, now I know why God didn't answer my prayer to supernaturally intervene and heal me of all my past and my brokenness and all the things that happened to me.

Here's why. We look at the story of the ruler. Okay? Look at the story of the ruler in that first passage, that first pericope. And the 12-year-old daughter.

We learn from the other passages that his name is Jairus. And he comes to Jesus and he expects from Jesus to heal his baby girl because that baby girl is dying.

In the other passages in Mark and Luke, it says she's as good as dead. So he comes to him and he says, I want you to do this one thing for me. Right? That's what he does. But then on the way, on the way, what happens?

[25 : 38] It gets stopped. Jesus is stopped by this girl, by this woman who's been hemorrhaging for 12 years. And he stops and he looks at her.

Right? And he deals with her. He heals her. He calls her, daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. And it's an amazing thing. And in the other gospels, it's even longer, the interaction. And from the ruler's position, I can imagine what he's thinking.

I came to you with this, God. This is serious. Don't you know that my girl's dying? But here is this girl. She is in acute condition. But here is this girl who's interrupting this thing right now with a chronic condition.

What's going on here? Right? I'm sure from his perspective at that moment, he's saying, God, Jesus Christ, the great physician is right now committing malpractice in my life.

Do you know what I'm saying? I would be thinking that. Like, ugh! And then in the other gospels, we learn that while they're waiting there, while this is happening, and Jesus is dealing with this woman who's bleeding, we're healing her, someone comes to the ruler, Jairus, and says, don't bother the guy anymore.

[26 : 53] Don't bother the healer. You know what? Your baby girl's dead. But Jesus is like, are you going to trust me? So they go back to the house. And there, you know, there's the huge procession.

Everyone's crying. There's flutes. And Jesus says, says to them, the girl's not dead. She's sleeping. Oh, not only is he committing malpractice, he doesn't know how to make the accurate diagnosis.

