

Come, Lord Jesus – make these words your Word, that our hearts may become your heart. Amen.

What is the one thing we see Jesus do most in the Gospels? Healing. Jesus healed. He sent his followers out to proclaim the Good News that God is near, and to demonstrate that Good News by healing the sick.

Proclaim the Good News, heal the sick.

Those two instructions always went together. Those two instructions go together.

And when they did go out in Jesus' name, lo and behold, they found it was true.

As they exercised the power Jesus gave them through the Holy Spirit –

they had the same ability to heal that Jesus did.

Because that's how things roll in the realm of God, what Jesus called the

Kingdom of God. God's desire for us, for all people, for this world, is wholeness.

Now, this story takes place early in Jesus' ministry.

He has just begun recruiting his followers, his disciples –

ordinary men and women who had a thirst for God, who left the familiar to go with Jesus wherever he was going, to learn from him.

That's what a disciple is – someone who stays close and learns from someone they trust. You scouts have experienced that with some of your scout leaders.

They teach you by inviting you to join them in doing things, whether it's camping or collecting food for the Food Pantry or doing an Eagle Scout project.

Jesus was the Scout Leader extraordinaire – there was a lot of camping for those who followed him. And he taught them about God's ways but also showed them.

So on this occasion, after worship Simon Peter goes home to visit his family, and he brings along Jesus and the whole crew.

They were probably ready for a home-cooked meal right about then.

But what's this? Peter's mother-in-law was sick.

Most people would have just been like, "Oh, that's too bad. Poor thing."

But not Jesus. He knows illness is not God's desire.

He brings his faith into the situation and takes her by the hand.

That healing light of God flows into her and up she gets.

Pretty soon they're enjoying that home-cooked meal.

Word spreads about that fast and after supper they find pretty much the

whole town gathered at the back door, with all the people in need of healing.

It seems like he spent pretty much that whole night healing.
And he spent pretty much the next three years healing.
And his disciples found they could continue that ministry of healing, because we see it all over the Book of Acts, which is the stories of those early communities of Christ followers after he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Jesus didn't even have to be in the room for them to heal.

Well, in a way, Jesus is always in the room,
because we invite his healing light to flow into everyone in need of healing. We are the body of Christ now, those who follow him. And his power is here. God is still in the business of healing, now through us. I have seen pretty amazing healing happening through prayer – including tumors disappearing before surgery, heel spurs going away, chronic back pain fading, broken hearts healing. And there are times I haven't seen the physical healing I desperately prayed for and it's heart-breaking – though even in those situations, where someone was seriously ill and did not miraculously recover, I've seen other kinds of healing: Forgiveness happening, relationships being healed before the person died.

Is there anything in your life for which you desire healing?
Something physical, or something emotional, some kind of forgiveness or release?
Jesus is always asking: "What do you want me to do for you?"
He offers us healing. Because he loves us.

And because he knows we'll be much more effective bearers
of his love and power to others if we're well and strong ourselves.
Health and vigor are part of our inheritance as saints of God.
That's what the beautiful prophecy from Isaiah says:
*He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.
... those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength*

Healing is in God's nature. It was in Jesus' nature. And guess what?
As we are united with him in baptism, it becomes part of our nature.
Yet is a part that many keep undeveloped – it makes us nervous.
But our God story shows us that Jesus' followers, as they allowed the Spirit
to work through them, began to manifest that nature of God too.
It is God's nature to make all things and people whole.
And if ever our world needed God's healing let loose, it's now.

Does it sound ridiculous to talk about healing in the face of pandemics and wars, an ever-widening income gap between rich and poor, with fascism and nationalism on the rise, our earth and waters and fellow creatures in peril? In the face of white supremacy and racism? Of a culture of online bullying? In the face of the epidemic of gun violence claiming our children, our elders?

Friends, we don't worship a small God. We worship a mighty God!

Whose power to heal is not diminished by the magnitude of the hurt. The only thing God needs is us, exercising the power God has given us. We conduct supernatural power and love into the natural sphere – but it can't go anywhere if we don't exercise it, any more than electricity can power a lamp if we don't turn it on. His power and love run through us, as we make ourselves available. Does that feel overwhelming to us? It is if we look at all the need at once. But look at this story: Jesus healed one woman. One. Word got out, and many came for the same thing. And then he healed many, but how? One person at a time. One person.

That's how God heals through us, as we conduct his power into one person at a time. I do it any time I injure myself, "Come, Lord Jesus, let your healing love flow." What if we did that when people we know are sick or injured? What if we did that when we got mad at someone, when we were hurt? What if we did that when we saw something in the news that made us hurt? Just pray, "Let your healing love and light flow, Lord; restore and renew." God acts in powerful ways much more often than we like to think. And we see God's power at work through us much more often when we exercise our faith. Try it this week, and let me know what happens.

Friends, healing happens in community. The community needs to hold the faith. I long to see our congregation much more active in the ministry of healing, to be more ambitious in the impact we can have on our wider community. I want us to expect God's power to heal and transform all the things we think cannot be transformed, or need to run their course. I want us to be seen as a healing community, those who worship here Sundays, our scouts who meet here weekly and work to bring healing in the region. Together, with Christ our healer, who is alive and at work through us, we can realize God's dream of wholeness for everyone. And nothing is impossible for the God we worship. *Amen?*

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.**

Isaiah 40:21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;

but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.