

Come Holy Spirit, come like the wind and cleanse; take these words and give them your life. Amen.

I think you know believe strongly in Jesus’ power to heal, even today.
I’ve started or deepened healing ministries in every church I’ve served.
I’ve seen amazing answers to prayer – and I’ve seen no discernible outcomes.
Yet the commitment to praying as Jesus’ hands and heart is strong.

I’ve also been very involved in interfaith ministry, and through that I met
a Muslim leader with great wisdom, good humor and gentle heart.
One day we were talking and Kareem told me that people in his community
often asked him to pray for healing. At first he didn’t know what to do,
but he just prayed... and very often they got better.
He told me one dramatic story of healing after another.
And I was confused. I thought we are to heal in Jesus’ name... what’s up?

“Resurrection” was a movie starring Ellen Burstyn and Sam Shepherd.
A woman who has had a catastrophic car accident is clinically dead for a few
moments, but lives. And after that she manifests a powerful gift of healing.
But she is not in the least religious – as the movie unfolds she is pursued
both by scientists intent on studying her brain,
and by Christians insisting she only heal in Jesus name. What’s up?

*John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name,
and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said,
“Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able
soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us.”*

It’s human nature to draw lines and borders that define some in and others out.
And God is ever messing with our tidy lines.
God is in the business of healing. God is in the business of resurrection.
The mission of God is to restore, reclaim and renew all of creation to wholeness
in Christ. God’ Spirit seems to show up wherever that is happening,
in whomever is willing to release God’s power and love into another.
That’s all we’re doing when we pray for healing – not begging God for a favor,
But channeling the power and love given to us into another person.
Prayer is bringing spiritual power to bear on material substance.

Deeds of power – dunamis, from which we get our word dynamite.
Do we feel power when we pray? Do we know we're exercising power?
Because, if those who claim to follow Jesus are not going to exercise the power we're given in prayer, others will. If the churches aren't going to offer truly open hospitality and welcome to people different from ourselves, people will find that community and support at CrossFit and Peleton.
Jesus talks about "salt that has lost its saltiness" – don't let that be said of us!

We can see from the letter of James that it was expected that communities of Christ followers would be about the business of healing and forgiveness. Those two things often go together in the gospels – Jesus would forgive and heal. And that's because our ailments are often connected to an inability to forgive or to accept forgiveness.
Healing is about setting people free, in body, mind and spirit.
God doesn't separate those aspects of our selves – God heals it all, as we allow. That's what I believe Jesus is saying with his violent metaphors about cutting away parts of ourselves that lead us to sin... think of it as spiritual surgery, to remove tissue that is sickening the whole. That's a kind of healing too.

So James writes, Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

What is the prayer of faith exactly? It is just that – praying in faith. Believing in the power of Jesus running through us through the Spirit. To offer the prayer of faith is to thrust a seed down into dark earth and trust that it will bear fruit, even before we see any sign of it sprouting
We give thanks by faith until faith gives way to sight.
And then with each sign of improvement or progress, we give thanks again. And even when we never see the healing we yearn for we give thanks – and we look to see where that seed is sprouting,
for I believe God is always answering our prayers.
God is in the business of healing. God is in the business of resurrection.

I'm excited that we now have a small healing prayer gathering every Tuesday at Christ Church Wayside. We are gathering the elders of the church. I'm anointing the sick. We are offering the prayer of faith.

It's not dramatic – yet we are learning to conduct power into one another.
Prayer is bringing spiritual power to bear on material substance.

We are going to pray this morning, as we always do, and allow extra time for
healing – so if you would like prayers for healing, you can raise your hand at
that point and those nearby can lay a hand upon you and pray over you.
[Those on Zoom will have an option to go briefly into a breakout room to pray.]
Prayer is bringing spiritual power to bear on material substance.

Jesus invites us to join God in the business of healing,
in the business of resurrection.

Wherever faith is being exercised in Jesus'

name, we can expect the Holy Spirit to be there with power and love.

Let's be active in our deeds of power – here, in this building, and out there,
In a world of hurt.

As people continue to sicken and die from Covid;

As people continue to suffer the effects of white supremacy;

As people contend with loss of jobs and homes and income –

there are so many places that need our power and love, my friends!

There are communities at the motels on 301 that need our power and love.

Let's get out there – and if someone who is not of our church or our faith
offers us cups of water as we do Jesus' work –
we are blessed, they are blessed, God is blessed.

Amen.

Mark 9:38-50

John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

“For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

James 5:13-20

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.