

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40: 27-31  
SECOND LESSON: Mark 1:29-39  
February 4, 2024

## **HEALING SERVICE**

### ***“God Is on the Move”*** Sermon © Lisa C. Farrell

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” These are words of hope to a people feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. Healing was needed. Restoration was needed. But God felt very far away. And that is often the position in which we find ourselves.

Last week we read about Jesus casting out a demon in the synagogue in Capernaum. This week’s reading takes place the same day at Simon Peter’s house. Simon, as he was known then, was married and his mother-in-law lived with them, a common arrangement of the time if she was widowed. When they got to Simon’s house following the synagogue service they found his mother-in-law was in bed with a fever.

Now “in bed with a fever” today is alarming. Then it was terrifying. People died all the time of conditions easily cured today. Some time ago I did a rundown of who in my family would still be alive today if we had lived 150 years ago, and half of us would be gone, including me, and some would have never been born. Until relatively recent times, fevers could rapidly lead to death. In some parts of the world today they still do.

Jesus did not allow this to happen. He came in, took her hand and helped her up. She was instantly healed. And of course, because she was a 1<sup>st</sup> century woman she immediately set about waiting on people and serving everyone. To be honest, my mom would have done the same thing. The fact that she can’t do all that now drives her crazy.

Touching a woman who was not a relative was not considered appropriate behavior at the time of Jesus. The fact that he took this woman by the hand is significant. Touch can be healing. Jesus even touched lepers. Touch accepts. It is a deeply personal act. When we pray for healing today we will anoint with oil and lay hands on people. We will use touch.

Jesus healed people and he delivered them from evil. He healed in private homes and public places. He didn’t go looking for people to heal, they pretty much found him. But he also didn’t stay in one place for long. We want to know why some people are healed and others are not healed, but even when he was alive Jesus did not heal everyone. The need was too great, and Jesus was always on the move going from one town to another. But when we stop and think about it, we were all designed by God to heal. After an injury our bodies go into overdrive to heal. I remember being amazed as a child at how quickly a skinned knee healed. And now that I am older, I miss that! Healing now is

much slower. When we fight infection, it is our cells that are at work. But sometimes what the body is facing is too much for it. God designed us to heal, but sometimes we need strength from outside. And emotional and spiritual wounds are even harder because we can't see them, even though they are there. A broken heart can heal, but it is not a simple matter. People heal from trauma, but there are scars.

Those Jesus healed were restored, not just physically, but socially and emotionally. Lepers could return home. Beggars could go back to the skills they had before to support themselves. And this particular woman, Simon's mother-in-law, went immediately back to being a hostess to her guests. We are healed into community, not in isolation.

What stops us from receiving God's healing are often the messages we have internalized from long ago. *"It's not that bad, stop whining . . . you just want attention . . . you don't deserve it . . . God only heals saints and you aren't one . . . you're not supposed to ask for yourself . . . God is busy, don't bother him, none of this healing stuff is real . . . God doesn't really bother with us . . . there is no God, who are you trying to kid?"* Doubt, fear, and a crippling low opinion of ourselves can block us from receiving God's healing.

A man once passed a group of elephants in a circus. He suddenly stopped because he was confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. There were no chains or cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any moment, break free but for some reason, they did not. He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away.

"Well," trainer said, "when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it's enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free."

Beliefs can imprison us. Grace frees us. God does not *want* us to be sick. God does not want us to be crippled by depression or anxiety or PTSD. When God's kingdom has fully come all sickness and all trauma will be gone. Let us come to our divine healer today bringing our hearts, minds and bodies and trusting in the God who loves us. Amen.

Isaiah 40: 27-31

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,

"My way is hidden from the Lord;  
my cause is disregarded by my God"?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

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

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,

and young men stumble and fall;  
<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

Mark 1:29-39

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.<sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.