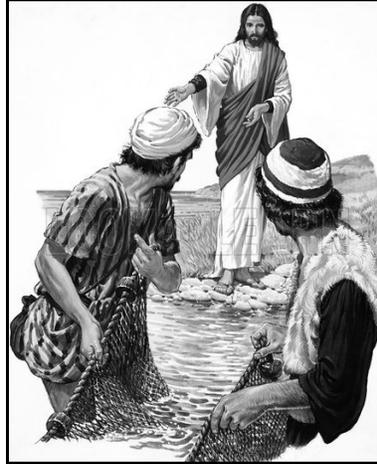


HEALING OTHERS HEALS OURSELVES



Scripture:

Psalm 61:5-8

⁵For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

⁶Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations! ⁷May he be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!

⁸So I will always sing praises to your name, as I pay my vows day after day.

Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



HEALING OTHERS HEALS OURSELVES

Do you answer when you are called?

Speaking of jury duty.... There was a jury duty joke going around where people received a message by email or a text to their phone directing them to pay a fine of \$500 for not answering their summons to jury duty. The message instructs them to call a phone number right away to remedy the situation. When they call the answering system says, “This is an urgent message from the National Justice System. If you were contacted to call this number, you failed to report for jury duty. Multiple notifications were sent to you. Your options are:

Press two to pay \$500, press three to serve thirty days in jail, or you have a final option. Pass this number to your most gullible friends to trick them the way you were tricked!”

Today’s passage in Mark is about another kind of call. Immediately he called them and they left their father and followed him. How does this happen? What was it about Jesus that he had such power to call fishermen and they drop their nets?

Silly question, I know. If God calls you, then you answer. But at this point, these hard-working fishermen didn’t really know who Jesus was.

Last week our scripture passage contained the quote from Nathanael, who said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael wasn’t alone. There were many skeptics about Jesus.

WHAT ATTRACTED PEOPLE?

So what was it about Jesus that attracted them? What so compelled the disciples to drop their nets and their familiar way of life to follow this mysterious man? I believe one of the main powers they could sense in Christ’s presence was his healing power.

According to Mark, Jesus went from being baptized to the temptations in the wilderness for forty days, and then straight out to the Sea of Galilee to call the sons of Zebedee. Biblical scholars have found that Mark is the oldest basic text of the story of Jesus, and that Matthew, Luke, and John reflected upon Mark when they wrote their own gospels.

JESUS’ POWER TO HEAL

But Luke, the physician, wrote in his gospel much more detail about Christ’s miraculous power to heal. Luke wrote that Jesus healed the man with the demon while he was inside the synagogue teaching and then went out of the synagogue to a house call to heal many others. According to Luke, these healings happened before recruiting his disciples. So the fishermen would have had a chance to hear about these amazing healings before meeting Jesus. Let’s review: Luke 4:31 to 41; the author describes Jesus going to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, where he taught them on the sabbath. It says, “They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority.”

Then, while he was still there in the synagogue there was a man who had a demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, “Let us alone! 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.”

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm.

The people there watching all of this were amazed and kept saying to one another, “What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power, he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!” And this next verse explains that “a report

about him began to reach every place in the region.” (So there is the evidence that the fishermen had heard something about Jesus.)

“After leaving the synagogue Jesus entered Simon’s house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.”

He first cured a mentally ill man and then Simon’s mother in law. Luke says, “As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases, brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them.”

After all of these healings, according to Luke 5, Jesus goes to the Sea of Galilee to fish for disciples as Mark describes.

“JESUS THE HEALER”

So, my question is: If Jesus first demonstrated his purpose on earth through healings, then why didn’t the people identify Christ by that characteristic in his name, “Jesus the healer?”

Wouldn’t that have been an appropriately descriptive name for Christ? Like John the Baptist, King Richard the lion-hearted, or Dennis the Menace.

What if Jesus Christ was called what he was known for from the beginning, “Jesus the Healer”?
How different would Christianity have evolved if the main behavior of Christ’s way, healing, was the main way of imitating him?
As disciples, our job is to imitate Christ as best we can.

We call Jesus our “Savior,” which has a root word: Salve. The dictionary definition of savior is someone who saves from danger, destruction, or failure.

The root word in Savior is Salvus in Latin, which means whole, safe, healthy, and uninjured. So Salve-ior links perfectly to healing.

Christ our Savior connects directly to the image of Christ as our healer, our salve, our healing balm.

The disciples must have sensed this about Jesus. They intuitively felt safe with him, because he was

a healer, and someone who promoted peace and wholeness.

HOW DID WE LOSE THE WAY?

How have we lost this understanding of Christ? How did being a disciple of Christ get so diverted by imperialistic power, like in the Crusades, where those who were not “true believers” of Christ were put to the sword, or in the Spanish Inquisition when the powerful in the church eliminated those who were not loyal to the Roman Catholic doctrine?

Jesus Christ came as a lover and healer to show us that Way of being in the world, the way of loving and healing.

And as the church of Jesus Christ and disciples of our Savior/Healer, we are to first and foremost promote healing love. He performed his first healing in a synagogue. The church is clearly to be a sanctuary of healing and wholeness, and God’s love is the foundation of healing.

LOVE

Love is the central ingredient. It is the powerful agent that enables the healing to happen in body, mind, or spirit. Love’s powerful energy for healing comes in the form of prayers, loving energy among friends, and courageous acts of kindness.

Church of the Roses will continue to grow and blossom again when we get focused back to our roots of love. When we focus on the loving healing and wholeness, we can provide for one another and for the community and world. It is so important to remember that this church was originally built by six-hundred volunteers in one day, and on that same day they held a wedding. Love is what the church is about.

Healing others heals ourselves. Loving ourselves helps us to love others. But how many of us take time to do that before we try to help others?

As a nurse speaking, if you don’t take time to love and take care of your body, mind, and spirit, you will not be strong enough to heal and love others. You won’t be around long enough to live out the purpose God has for you here at Church of the Roses for the healing of the world.

HEALING YOURSELF

Where do you need to heal? Ponder that for a few moments. What do you need to focus on and love in yourself enough to work on getting it healed? Maybe your healing is in your spirit. You

are trying to function while feeling shame and guilt about something that happened and you deeply need forgiveness but you are afraid to ask or admit it. Or maybe you deeply need to forgive someone but the process feels too overwhelming.

All of us need love and healing somewhere in our lives. It is not a selfish thing to focus on your own mental and physical and spiritual health.

It is a gift to all those in your life and in your church and a gift to all those you will more effectively be able to help someday if you heal the wounds and burdens you carry.

COME TO ME

Jesus famously said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11: 28-29)

Do you hear that call? “Come all who are weary and heavy laden.” Jesus still calls us. Jesus still leads us. Jesus still teaches us when we pray and read his word. Jesus still heals us so we can heal others with God’s powerful love.

So how do we heal others? We heal when we realize we need other humans. Gatherings with others are life saving. Our foundational need for connection is met here in the church and wherever we experience supportive social interactions.

There is new scientific research that shows when a person is connected to others, they live longer and healthier. There is enough proof that depression can be relieved with positive social interactions that doctors should start prescribing social group activities like the Presbyterian women. Or doctors should prescribe joining our Buildings and Grounds committee because giving of your talents to repair the church in a fun-loving group builds resilience in body and mind. Sadly, when people suffer mentally, they often isolate themselves away from others. They quit going to church.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

The future of the church is dependent upon people realizing that we need the church and the

church needs us for good health and wellbeing just as much today as in the past.

Last June, Time Magazine interviewed Reverend Amy Butler, the new senior pastor at Riverside Church in New York City about her take on the past, present, and future of the church.

Reverend Butler said, "I think the church of the past is not the church of the future, and I think we don't know what the church of the future is yet. I think the church is not going away because people are looking for community and people are looking for a place to ask the big questions. And if the church can provide a place in which both of those things are present, it's going to be a place where people are going to want to come and be part of it. So I don't know what the future of the church looks like, but it's going to look different."

Today, on our Congregational Meeting day, how do we provide a hopeful community for the future of our church?

- We love generously.
- We keep a positive attitude about a hopeful future.
- We look for new ways to love others and provide healing and wholeness in this place, in this neighborhood and beyond.
- We keep doing what we know provides connectedness and a sense of caring community.
- We take time to love ourselves and upgrade our bodies, minds, and spirits with prayer, Bible study, exercise, and more gatherings so we are fit to facilitate God's healing power in the world.

Our purpose as a church is to be a sacred sanctuary of healing and wholeness following the Way Christ taught us.

John Philip Newell, who was here last week, shared in one of his books the image of the banyan tree. It grows in a way that shows the need for connectedness. Banyan tree roots reach out and connect with other trees for support. When the winds blow the trees don't fall if they are adequately connected. Then as the banyans grow they become shelters for many types of creatures.

Think of this church as a big banyan tree reaching out to connect to others in our church family and community and world. When stress, disease, jury duty and other disruptions come into our lives, or into the lives of those in our community, we support one another with love and care and prayer rooted in God. And as we grow we will discover more and more that when we strengthen, love, and heal others, we end up healing ourselves.

Thanks be to God for Jesus, the Healer. Amen

Benediction: Be healed and be a healer as Jesus the Healer taught us to be.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more. Amen



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