



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

We live in a time when we have the most sophisticated health care of any country in the world. The technology for providing health care has never been more advanced than it is today. Hip and knee replacements, laser eye surgeries, drugs to hold cancer at bay, and so many more things I cannot even comprehend. Yet many of us are concerned about Marshfield Clinic in Park Falls. Urgent care is already gone and so are their hospice services. Will it stay open to serve us well into the future. Ironic, isn't it. There is a crisis in the delivery and accessibility of health care even in our own community. Something is out of kilter here. But that is not exactly what I am going to talk about this morning.

So, what do we as users of all of this medical technology think of this Gospel story of Jesus' healing. There is proof that Jesus was able to heal the physical body. But what about the rest of the person? Is Jesus going around the countryside just healing bodies? I cannot believe that there is not more to this story!

In fact, in my own experience as a pastor, I have found that there is healing far beyond the medical and physical. I have prayed with families for healing for their loved ones, who were nearing death. And the result was not that the person got up and walked out of the hospital room rid of their physical ailments, but rather that they came to realized that they were right with God, and they could live out the rest of their life in peace, however long that was. God was in control of their destiny and often times the loved ones were also able to let go and feel the calm spirit of the dying family member.

Some of you have stood with me, right here in this sanctuary where we all laid hands on a member struggling with cancer and prayed together. The cancer never really went away but the man was

able to feel God's love and come to grips with the direction he was headed in, for the remaining months of his life.

Healing comes in many forms, and I believe that Jesus did not just heal the physical. And we still see Him at work today even if physical conditions do not change, but on a more profound level the person is restored to a peace, wholeness of heart, and a readiness to face their circumstance and or death with faith and acceptance.

Another example of healing would be to look at people who are living with AIDS. They are experiencing healing today with the advent of new drugs like Biktarvy and Dovato, that you hear about on TV. They can go on with their daily lives without pre-occupation of their disease to bind them. They are welcomed into communities and healed of social stigma. Maybe in their lifetime there will not be a cure for AIDS, but these folks are more able to live full lives.

If we look at the healing in our Gospel story today, we see that Jesus cured the mother-in-law of Simon of her affliction and she was immediately able to go back to doing in life what she always had done, as the matriarch of the home. Her life was restored in community.

Also, in our lesson today, we not only hear that Jesus is healing many people from their illnesses but that He also is able to cast out many demons. This is a different because it goes beyond the physical. Eradicating demons within a person lends itself to healing of the mind or spirit.

So, what do you think the reason is for Jesus' doing both physical and spiritual healing in His day and today? I believe it is to give us a chance to serve Him with gratitude. It also in many cases gives those people the opportunity to live fully into His kingdom on earth. It restores people to community. Put differently, we are saved to serve. Being made whole in Christ so that we can be agents of healing in the name of Christ and go out and proclaim the good news by the way we live with others and for others.

In our text for today, we see that Jesus healed many people of sickness and demons. We do not hear that those folks became disciples of Jesus. We do not hear that they were thankful and praised Jesus for what He had done. So, Jesus' healing in this town, has come to an end. He is ready to move on. He says, "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." Jesus came to preach and teach. Could it be that Jesus was so overwhelmed with healing that He could not complete His mission of sharing the love of God. Other towns need to hear the good news of the Gospel too. And Jesus needed to continue to teach His disciples how to do just that. There would come a day when they would have to take over His mission of preaching and teaching. In fact, this is the last instance in Mark's Gospel where we hear of Jesus preaching. He will transfer the preaching to the disciples who will soon become the church in cities around Galilee.

And so, what do we get to glean from this text message this morning? I think that the message here is that as Christ's church we will be involved in a host of activities, but none as important as preaching the Gospel. Earlier in Chapter one, Mark records Jesus saying, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news."

Jesus has shown and given us direction as to how to share the Gospel with everyone we meet. We are called to heal the spirit and the soul of others by letting people know what God has done for us and how He has cleansed our souls. But we must remember that His most important call to us is to

share the Gospel with others. And we can do that better when we repent and believe in Jesus ourselves and the gracious gifts he gives us of forgiveness, abundant and eternal life. We then open ourselves to His teaching and will grow to be His hands in our world. Verse 31 says, “He took her by the hand and lifted her up.” Folks, we can do that to those in need as well. Helping people heal can be as easy as this story by Rev Dr Roy W Howard:

The other day while visiting someone in a nursing home I stepped out of the elevator and into a room where frail men and women were slumped in wheelchairs in a posture that made my neck hurt looking at them. Their chins were on their chests, or their heads were leaning limply on one shoulder. Some were drooling. All the chairs were lined up in front of a television showing a soap opera and the sound was much too loud for anyone, even those hard of hearing. It was a miserable sight. But then something unexpected happened.

A young girl, maybe 7 or 8 years old, stepped away from her mother who was visiting someone else. With her mother’s encouragement this little girl placed her hand upon the hand of man slumped in a wheelchair, numb, the living dead. She looked at him and smiled as she said her name. “What’s your name?” she asked. And I believe I witnessed a healing taking place in the living room of that nursing home. The man tilted his head up slightly and looked at her. His face broke into a smile, and he said his name. Then the little girl went from person to person in each wheelchair offering the same healing touch and the same welcoming benediction. No one tossed a wheelchair out the window, and no one danced a jig, but I believe we all experienced, for a moment, the restoration of the community of life where everyone has a place.

This is the social healing that Jesus brings through people like this little girl. And there is no reason we cannot be the healing hands of Christ in our community. Healing is truly the work of Christ, yet we can deliver that touch, that gentle caring touch that changes the world for someone, even if just for a moment.

Many of you know that I grew up with a father that was a Christian Scientist. Mom took my sister and I to the Lutheran church for instruction, but we were often times visitors in Grandma Brown’s church, the Church of Christ, Scientist on the east side of Milwaukee. Well, on Sunday morning I would go to Sunday school downstairs when the adults went to Sunday service. But on Wednesdays it was a different experience. Every Wednesday there was a meeting, somewhat similar to a Sunday service, but the scriptural selections were customized to the need of the congregation and occasion. Instead of the usual message by the pastor or reader, you would hear, sometime hours of fellow attendees share insights, experiences, and healings that they have had as a result of their prayer and study of Scripture. On several occasions my grandma would share a healing she had experienced. Even at a young age, I was always listening carefully to these wonderful healings people had. Don’t fear I am not going to ask you to give testimony this morning.

But I wonder today if we shouldn’t all sit back and think of all the healings whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual, that have come to our lives by asking ourselves these questions: Where is Christ at work healing me? Where in my life have I felt His touch? When have I seen the light of Christ? How is Christ at work in my life to change me so that I become the person God wants me to be?

I think we would all be well served to take some time as Lent approaches, to do this self-reflection. Where is Christ at work healing me? Healing us so that we can announce the good news of God’s love through this healing and sharing with others what God has done for us.

**AMEN**