

“Healing is for Today”

1 Corinthians 12

Matthew chapter 4 verse 23 – 24:

“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.”

Luke 10:1

“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.”

Luke 10 verse 8:

“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

1 Corinthians 12:7 – 11:

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.”

One morning a pastor asked people to respond after the service by calling people to come forward for prayer.

A man comes forward and says “Can you pray for my hearing?”

The pastor says “Absolutely!”, grabs hold of the man’s head and launches into a prayer; he shakes the man’s head, names and claims it,

speaks it into being and finally after few minutes he asks, "How's your hearing?"

The man says, "My hearings fine but my court appearance is on Tuesday."

Which brings us to the topic of healing this morning.

Our bodies are self-healing.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Inherit in the way that we have been designed is this incredible way our bodies can regenerate.

A healthy body fights infection, heals wounds, kills cancer cells, repairs damage, and fights the aging process.

Alongside that, through science and the work of the medical profession we can receive healing.

Some of us have worked or received care from this area. (And it's always good to note that hospitals as places of cure are a Christian creation).

Having said that, the healing that Scripture most often talks about is *a spontaneous recovery or cure that cannot be explained by any other means except for the power and work of the Holy Spirit.*

Healing was a significant part of Jesus' ministry.

Our reading from Matthew records healing every disease and sickness, various diseases, severe pain, those having seizures and the paralysed.

And it's just one of many passages that show that Jesus healed people.

So when you do the research you find that of the 3774 verses in the Gospels, 484 mention Jesus healing.

Even his enemies couldn't deny the Jesus was miracle worker.

Healing is also spoken of as a gift Jesus gives to His church, his body.

It is one of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians.

So many people do speak of receiving healing from Jesus today.

Recently I read a story told by probably the greatest living New Testament scholar and theologian on the planet. He told the story of his six year old niece, his sister's daughter, who when she was 6 years old, suffered from double kidney failure. The doctors and medical staff told the parents that they had done all that they could do for her. She would dead within a day or two. They should take her home and make comfortable as possible.

However people began to pray for her, including people in other parts of the world.

That girl is now a woman in her mid-30s, she has been a Christian missionary teacher in India.

Astonishingly, the doctors to this day don't know how her kidneys got better, but they did.

But it's not just physical healing.

The Greek is literally "gifts of healings".

All kinds of healings just as Jesus healed all sorts of illness and disease.

And not only that.

There are all kinds of healing that God does in a person, not just physical.

God wants to heal emotions and minds as much as bodies.

One morning, on impulse, as I ended the service I said to the congregation that if anyone wanted to remain behind for healing, I would be glad to pray for them. I told them they shouldn't expect much to happen, because nothing much happens when I pray, but if they wanted to give it a try, I'd be willing to pray as hard as I could. Surprisingly, about thirty people stayed behind and waited patiently as I prayed for one after the other.

I did not want to do this healing thing fast, like some of the healers I see on television. I wanted to really talk to a person before I prayed and get a feel for what was on that person's heart. I wanted to hug each person and connect with him or her as deeply as I knew how. I did that with each of the people who stayed behind, and in each case I put some olive oil that I had brought along with me on each of their heads.

It took me more than an hour to pray through that little group. But I did it!

What intrigued me was that most of the people who had come for healing had nothing physically wrong with them. One man needed healing for an addiction to pornography. One woman wanted healing for

her marriage. Someone else asked healing for anger. But there were a few who did have physical illness.

Four days later I had a telephone call, and the woman at the other end said, "On Sunday you prayed for my husband. He had cancer."

When I heard the word "had" my heart quickened a bit. "*Had* cancer?" I asked.

The woman answered, "Well, he's dead now."

Then the woman said, "You don't understand. When my husband and I walked into that church on Sunday, he was angry with God. He had cancer and knew he was going to be dead soon, and he hated God for letting it happen. He wanted to see his grandchildren grow up more than anything. At night he would lie in bed and curse God. It was horrible. And the angrier he got toward God, the meaner he was to everyone around him. It was unbearable to be in the same room with him. His nastiness just kept on getting worse and worse and worse. But then you laid hand on him on Sunday morning and prayed for him.

When he walked out of the church I knew there was something different. I could feel it. He was a different person. The last four days of our lives have been the best four days we've ever had together. We talked and laughed. We even sang hymns with each other. It was a good, good time.

She paused, then added something really profound.

She said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed." ¹

Yet for every story of physical healing there are many stories of those who are not even after earnest prayer.

And so you unavoidably come up against one question:

"Why are some people healed and not others?"

Why isn't everyone healed?

Why does Jesus heal some people today and not others?

What answers have you heard to that question?

Have a chat about that with the person next to you.

¹ Tony Campolo, *Let Me Tell You a Story* (USA: W Publishing, 2000), 34 – 36.

“The gifts of healing finished with the Early Church”.

Well some would quite, simply, healing as we see in the Bible, is not for today.

It ended when the Twelve Apostle’s died.

So if someone is healed today, it either coincidence or the intervention of modern medicine.

Well we know that Jesus had the twelve who were given the authority in Jesus name to heal in the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, it wasn’t only the Twelve.

In our reading from Luke there were seventy-two commissioned to heal the sick.

Later you can read in Acts where you see Philip and Stephen healing the sick in the power of the Spirit.

Philip and Stephen weren’t apostles... they were deacons. Deacons are the equivalent to a Board of Managers.

So next time you’re sick you can ask someone from the board of managers to pray for you...😊

Then in Corinthians 12 Paul lists the gift of healing in his letter to a congregation.

In other words it wasn’t only the Apostles who were able to heal.

SO in response some people do say, “Yes that’s true but the gifts of the Spirit, such as healing, slowly faded away after the first Christians”.

However, church history says otherwise.

Irenaeus of Lyon wrote in 180 A.D.:

“For some do certainly and truly drive out devils...

Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions and utter prophetic expressions.

Others heal the sick by laying their hands upon them , and they are made whole. Moreover, as I have said, the dead have even been raised up and remained with us for many years.”

Tertullian wrote:

“Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty and they with the instructions... of the Creator.”

In 248 AD Origen wrote of manifestations of the Spirit and of power:

“They expel evil spirits, and perform many healings, and foresee certain events, according to the will of the Word... And the name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, and expel demons, and also take away diseases.”

We’ve talked about Charles Spurgeon who would often pray for the healing of others.

“It’s because you lack faith”.

What about this one: if someone isn’t healed it is because of a lack of... faith. Who’s heard that before?

So the first story I told you about the husband who experienced a healing the inside? What I didn’t say was that the people who prayed for him said the reason you aren’t healed physically is because you lack faith.

And of course whenever someone says that, what’s the implication?

The implication is that there is something deficient in you; that’s some wrong with you and it’s your fault.

So they send people on a trip – a guilt trip.

That is devastating to someone and their relationship with God.

We have to be so, so careful when it comes to this area of sickness, suffering and healing.

Some people leave the faith altogether, gone, never to be seen again because of this kind of talk.

What I’ve also found is that people who say that’s all about faith also say this: in the ministry of Jesus, everyone who came to him was healed without exception.

And in the Early Church, there were no sick Christians.

Every believer experienced divine health and-or healing.

And because that is the case, that should be our experience too.

Has anyone heard that one before?

The thing is, that is simply just not true.

In you Bibles come with me to 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 23:

“Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your *frequent* illnesses.”

This is Paul writing to Timothy who he called a son in the faith. Timothy who had travelled with Paul on many of his missionary trips. Timothy who had witnessed the power of the Spirit at work. Yet here he suffering not just from an illness but a frequent illness. And there is no mention of Timothy’s need to have special faith.

Now come with me to 2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 20:

“Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus *sick* in Miletus.”

And again, when you do a bit of a word-search you discover that Trophimus also accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. However Trophimus is unable to continue with Paul because of sickness. Paul through whom Jesus healed others in the power of the Spirit does not see it happen with Trophimus.

In both these cases there’s no mention of faith; just bare facts of matter.

The Kingdom of God

So a partial answer lies in the area of theology.

It goes like this: in the teaching of Jesus and Paul, history is divided up into two ‘ages’, two periods of time.

There is this ‘present age’ and then there is the ‘age to come’.

This present age is marked by sickness and illness and injury and strife and death, would you agree?

The future age when God rules is marked by ‘shalom’, which means, wellness, wholeness, health, life and peace.

And another name for this future age is a one Jesus used a lot.

This future age, the age to come, is also known as the... kingdom of God.

Then it says in Scripture that Jesus as the King of the kingdom – the future age – came in to this present age and brought with him what...?

Wellness and wholeness and health and peace and life.

The kingdom of God – the rule of God – which is future, has invaded the present – but not completely.

The kingdom of God has come in Jesus – but it is still coming.

The kingdom is already – but it is not yet.

The kingdom of God is now but its fullness is still yet to be.

So some people are healed now in the present – but some people will remain unhealed.

One day all who trust in Jesus will experience full health and healing.

But for now we wait.

So what's the take-away this morning?

What I feel to say is firstly is this:

The same God who the first believers called their Father is the same God who we call our heavenly Father today.

The same Jesus who healed and made people whole, who died and rose again is the same Jesus we love and worship and commune with today.

And same Holy Spirit who was present in the Early Church is the same Holy Spirit present in Cromwell Presbyterian Church this morning.

And since that is true we can follow charge given to us in 1 Corinthians 14 verse one: "eagerly desire spiritual gifts."